

A SURPRISING REASON WHY HORSES SEEK SHELTER

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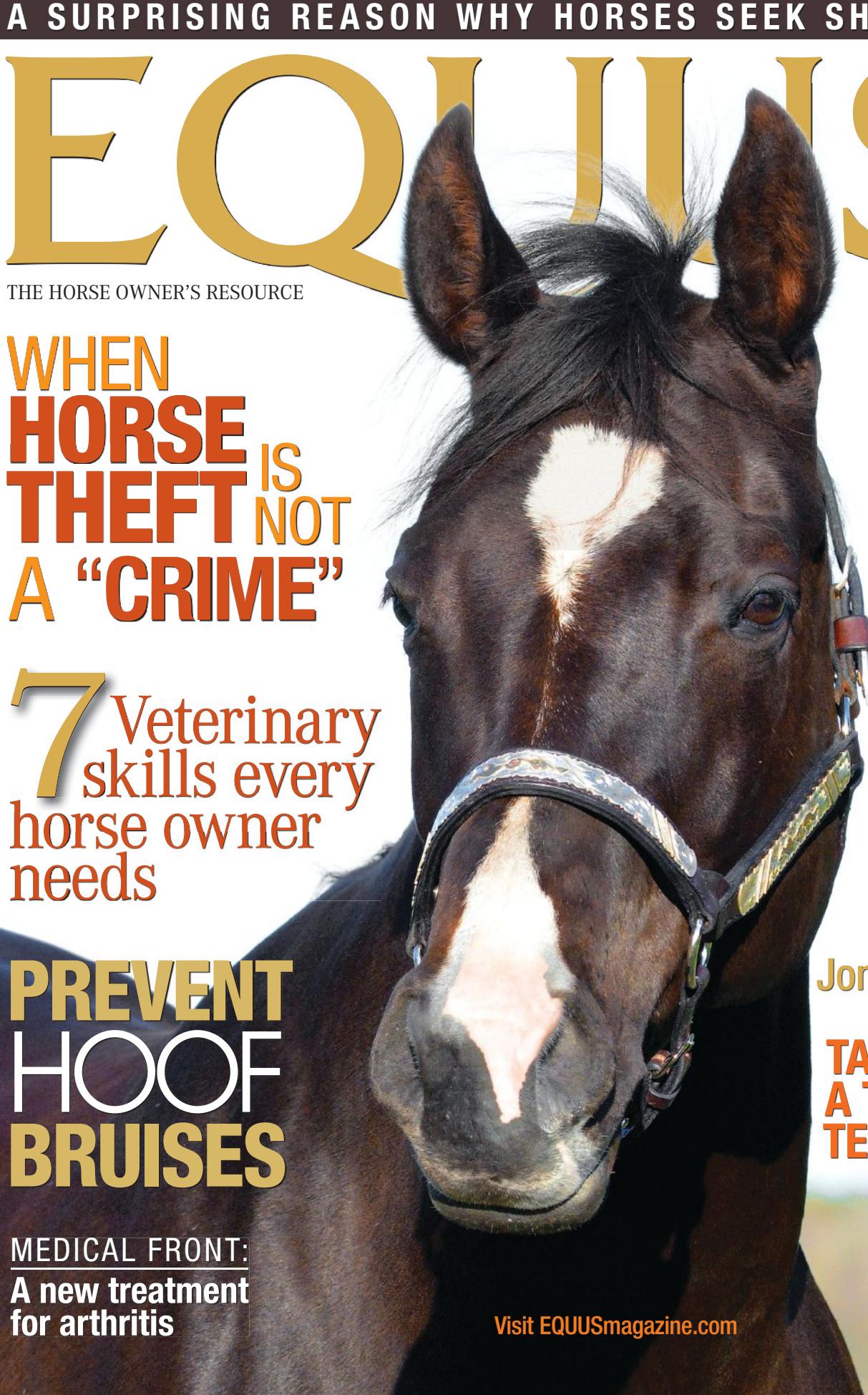
AUGUST 2015  
ISSUE 455

WHEN  
**HORSE**  
**THEFT** IS **NOT**  
A "CRIME"

7 Veterinary  
skills every  
horse owner  
needs

PREVENT  
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MEDICAL FRONT:  
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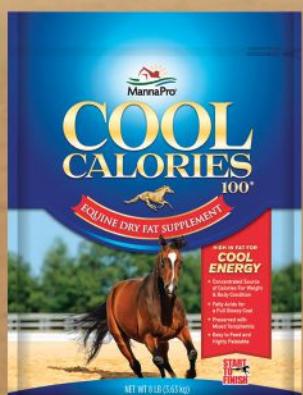
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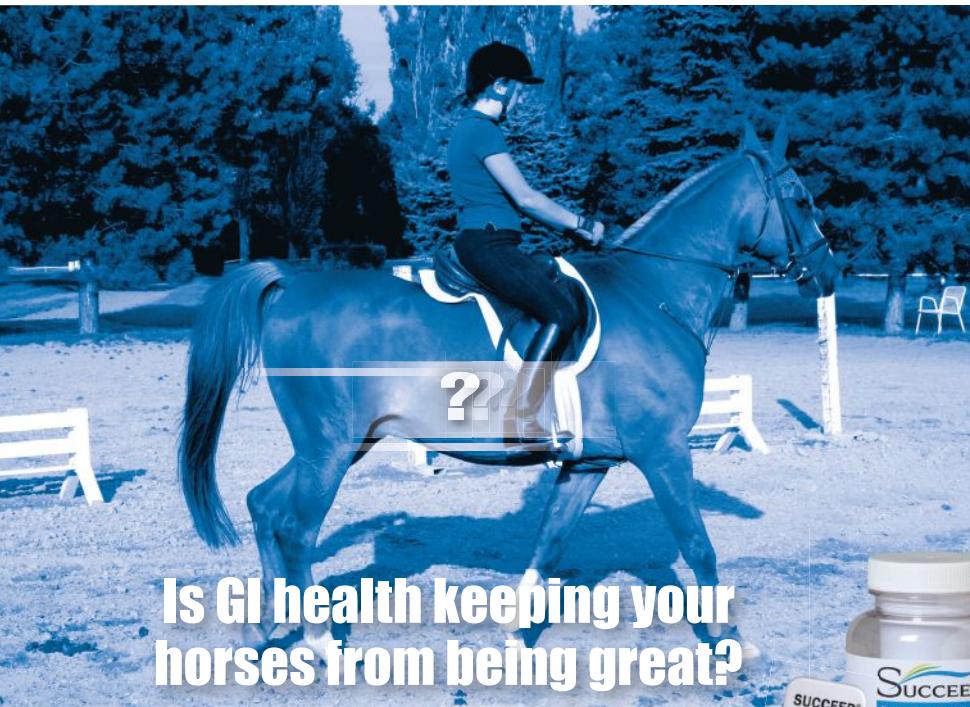
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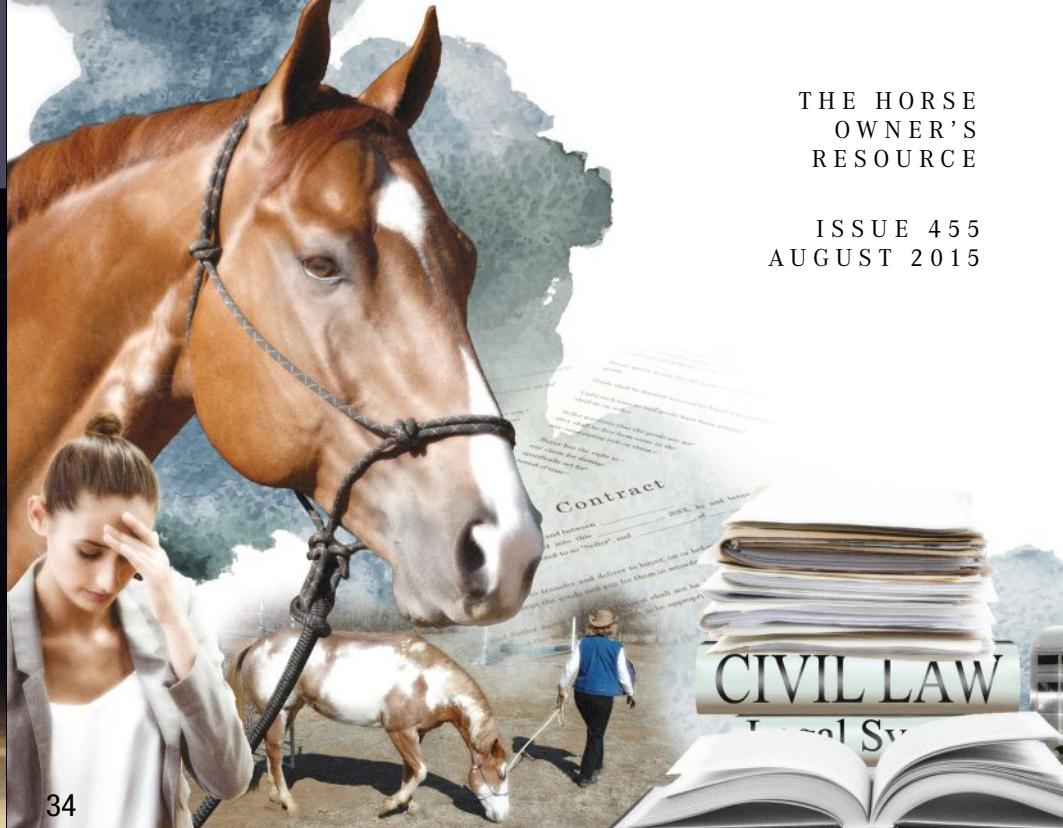


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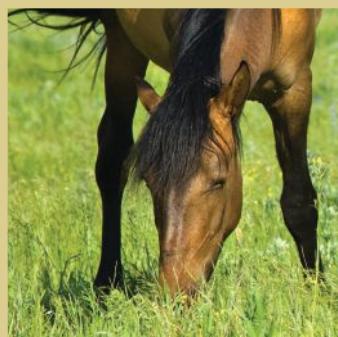
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## Spread the word

As a horse owner of 52 years, a humane investigator and a member of the EQUUS family since issue # 1, I have been moved by articles over the years and educated by many. But none have had such a lasting impact with me as "The Squeezing Cure" (EQUUS 452), which will save so many lives once we get the "word" out widely enough.

I applaud John Madigan, DVM, whose curiosity and concern led to this breakthrough method for curing dummy foals with ropes and pressure. I grow emotional thinking of all the foals who have lost their lives needlessly and the efforts spent trying to save them. I am passing the word and connecting horsemen to the information provided regarding this simple procedure that will save lives, time, energy, financial stress and emotional heartbreak.

*Bobbi Gubelman  
Coal City, Illinois*

## Keep your distance

"Establishing Personal Space" (Conversations, EQUUS 453) really rang our bells. Our 8-year-old gelding, SLA Ulrich LaredoKid, doesn't know the meaning of personal space, and it's everyone's fault. He was born a twin and spent 10 days with his sister and mother at Auburn University Large Animal Clinic. He is a very loud leopard Appaloosa, and with all those spots is about as cute as can be. He was very healthy and the vet techs loved on him like a puppy. It didn't stop when he came home.

Laredo doesn't think he is a horse. He acts like a large puppy who can't stand it if he isn't being loved on by anyone in sight. He will leave his grain just to run to be loved and touched. We know we are at fault and must constantly remind this big pet that he is really a horse. There isn't a mean bone in his body,

but he is just too big to be a lap dog.

Our advice to everyone with a very cute foal is to be strong and don't make a "pet" out of him. Eventually, these sweet babies will grow up and become full-size horses.

*Lynda Edwards  
Montgomery, Texas*

## The need for reform

Thank you so much for the Conformation Insights article "Promoting The Classic Thoroughbred" (EQUUS 453). It was a very well-researched and in-depth look at some of the major issues in the Thoroughbred racing industry. I could not agree more about the logical and fundamental changes that need to take place in the breeding and training of Thoroughbreds.

I have said many of the very same things myself countless times—passionately—from "we are breeding the feet and legs right off these horses" to my main sermon: The fact that these horses should never be worked under saddle, pushed or raced as 2-year-olds! Thoroughbreds are not any more mature physically at that age than any other breed, and less so than most. It's a ludicrous and wholly detrimental practice! And I agree that both licit and illicit performance-enhancing drug use would almost disappear if this common practice were changed. Most of these horses never get to demonstrate their true potential that comes only with maturity and soundness.

I wish the Jockey Club and every person involved in Thoroughbred racing were required to read your article and change this one fundamental issue above all others. The industry also needs to realize that their attitude of "It's all about the breeding and pedigree" really just means more inbreeding and issues. They have brought all of today's major problems upon themselves,

and they'll have to be forced into fundamental changes from the breeding through the training and racing. I hope they soon understand that the survival of the industry and what's best for these horses just might go hand-in-hand.

*Jan Hoagland  
North Lima, Ohio*

## Bird control

I solved the problem of birds in my barn by hanging one-inch strips of canvas strap material from the stall doorways ("Bye Bye Birdie," Letters, EQUUS 453). It was easy to teach the horses to go through them, but it kept the pests out. The only birds that flew in were swallows that turned sideways to fly between the straps, but they didn't cause any problems. On the other hand, the messy pigeons, starlings and sparrows stayed out.

*Linda Hibbard  
Minden, Nevada*

## More help for back pain

"What to Do About Your Horse's Sore Back" (EQUUS 452) offered excellent options to help owners understand what is causing their horses' back issues and how to go about treating them. But I would add the suggestion, when considering the source of back pain, to look at the hooves.

I have worked with horses for more than 50 years now. I became an equine massage practitioner in 1994 thanks to a series of articles EQUUS did on alternative therapies, and I learned plenty about back soreness coming from the feet up and/or the saddle down. In my experience, feet seemed to be the biggest problem, followed by saddle-fitting

issues. I trained and certified in barefoot trimming in 2009 because I could not fix all the problems above the hoof without also addressing the hoof issues. Long toes combined with low/high heels seem to cause the most problems by locking the hocks back and causing the pelvis to tilt. This also wreaks havoc on the stifles. Throw in small feet or four feet that don't match, and the issues compound.

If you have a horse who has back

issues, cannot pick up leads easily or is sore in ligaments or tendons, look at his feet. They should look like they match and belong to your horse. Remember, some farriers have no formal training; they may not be riders or horsemen; and they may not watch your horse move before working on them—and yet we trust them to know what angles and hooves should be on our horses.

*Candy Giordano  
Davie, Florida*

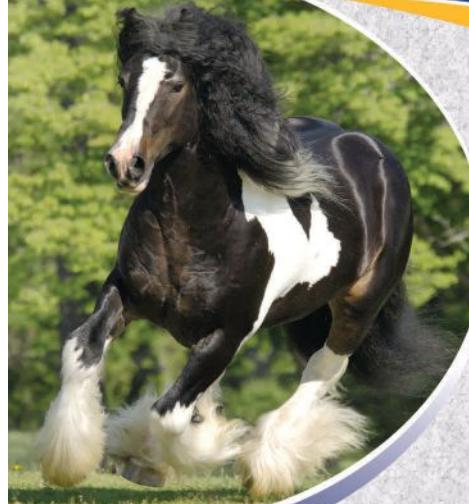
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## WHY HORSES SEEK SHELTER

A recently published study from Sweden suggests that horses head for run-in sheds to avoid insects rather than to seek respite from the sun.

For the study, researchers at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences monitored the behavior of eight horses for two weeks in July 2012. During the study period, each horse was turned out in one of four paddocks for one day at a time. In two of the paddocks there were two shelters: a three-sided shed with a roof, and an open structure that had a roof but no walls. Horses were free to choose either shelter and move between the two. The remaining two paddocks had no shelters.

"An open-sided shelter would give shade and allow a surrounding view but may be less effective in terms of insect protection,"



says Elke Hartmann, PhD. "Therefore, we wanted to ask the horses themselves whether they 'prefer' an open or closed shelter."

In addition to determining how long each horse stayed in each shelter, the researchers gathered data on weather conditions—including temperature, wind speed and relative humidity—every 10 minutes. They also did a daily count of insects collected in traps in the shelters and in a control trap set up in a paddock some distance from the horses.

Finally, rectal and skin temperatures were taken on all of the horses three times a day, and their behavior was documented at five-minute intervals from 9 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The data revealed that five of the seven horses who entered a shelter during the study period had a clear preference for the three-sided shelter over the open structure. The researchers noted a significant drop in insect-defensive behavior, such as



**RESPITE:** In a new study, horses showed a marked preference for sheds with three sides, which offered greater protection from insects.

skin shivers and ear flicking, when the horses were in the closed shelter, which suggests that the insects were less bothersome in that type of structure.

Temperatures during the study period were moderate, reaching only 77 degrees Fahrenheit. The researchers found no correlation between temperature and humidity and shelter use, but they did find that horses were less likely to utilize

a shelter on windy days.

Noting that fewer insects were caught in the traps on those days, Hartmann says, "Increased wind speed often decreases insect activity, thus horses are more likely to be observed outside shelters."

She adds that individual preferences could have also played a role in shelter utilization during the study.

"There may be other reasons besides insects and weather conditions that can influence whether a horse goes into the shed," she says. "And some horses may have simply liked to stay inside."

Based on the results of this study, Hartmann recommends offering horses shelter, even when temperatures may be mild. "If horses are kept 24 hours on pasture during summer, I would recommend to offer shelter. At least horses would then have a choice."

A new study from Poland shows how well-adapted the equine coat is for different seasons.

Researchers at the University of Life Sciences in Lublin, Poland, followed a group of five Polish Konik mares living on a reserve in a temperate southeastern part of the country. They took photographs of the mares every two weeks throughout the year and used a computer to analyze hair growth patterns. Specifically, the researchers calculated the percentage of the surface of each horse's body covered by short hair at



BOB LANGRISH

## HOW YOUR HORSE'S COAT CHANGES

each evaluation and determined which regions of the body had short hair.

Their findings underscore how the equine coat contributes to equine body temperature regulation in hot and cold weather months. The largest increase in the percentage of short body hair occurred during April and the first half of May,

when the horses were shedding. Similarly, short hair percentages decreased the most in September, when winter coats began to grow in.

In addition, analysis of the hair covering specific areas of the body revealed some new information: The horses' shoulders, backs and loins were covered by winter coat longer than

were other areas of the body. The researchers say that this is probably associated with the strong effect of rain and snow on the upper part of the body.

**Reference:** "Changes of coat cover in primitive horses living on a reserve," *Journal of Animal Science*, March 2015

## PROMISING NEW ARTHRITIS TREATMENT

A gel commonly used in urology and plastic surgery shows promise as a treatment for arthritis in horses, according to a new study from Denmark.

Polyacrylamide hydrogel, which has long been used to reconstruct or augment tissue in human medicine, is a non-degradable gel composed of 97.5 percent water and 2.5 percent polyacrylamide, a highly biocompatible polymer. A 2014 University of

Copenhagen study showed that polyacrylamide hydrogel injected into the joints of goats became integrated with the synovial<sup>0</sup> membrane, significantly reducing lameness caused by arthritis.

To see whether similar effects occur in horses, the researchers selected 43 with arthritis-related lameness (mild, moderate or severe) diagnosed in

only one joint. A polyacrylamide hydrogel product was injected into each arthritic joint and the horse was then rested for two weeks before beginning a tightly controlled progressive exercise program. (The product used in the study is not currently approved by the Food and Drug Administration but is available to veterinarians through

a European supplier.)

The researchers gave each horse a follow-up exam to assess lameness at one, three, six, 12 and 24 months after the injection. At the one-month follow-up, 59 percent of the horses showed no lameness, and by the end of the two-year study period, 82.5 percent of the horses were sound and had resumed their previous workload. The largest reduction in lameness in each horse took place between the injection and the first follow-up exam.

The success of a single injection even after two years, the researchers say, is likely due to the integration of the

**References:** "Evaluation of a polyacrylamide hydrogel in the treatment of induced osteoarthritis in a goat model: A randomized controlled pilot study," *Osteoarthritis and Cartilage*, April 2014; "An international multi-centre prospective study on the efficacy of an intraarticular polyacrylamide hydrogel in horses with osteoarthritis: a 24-month follow-up," *Acta Veterinaria Scandinavica*, April 2015

## REDUCE STRESS FOR SUCCESSFUL PREGNANCIES



product into the synovial membrane as well as the persistence of the product in the joint fluid to improve lubrication, a process known as “viscosupplementation.” They note that this product integration has also been shown to help treat joint stiffness, a cause of pain in arthritis, in the goat study.

The researchers did not observe any adverse effects in any of the horses over the two-year study period.

## RARE VIRUS OUTBREAK IN JAPAN

Last fall, an outbreak of the rare viral infection known as Getah swept through a racing stable in Japan.

A mosquito-borne arbovirus, Getah is widespread among vertebrate populations in Eurasia and Australasia (Australia, New Zealand, the island of New Guinea and neighboring islands in the Pacific Ocean) but has rarely been associated with illness in horses.

Affected horses usually show mild signs consistent with other viral diseases, such as a fever, leg swelling, skin rashes and enlarged glands around the head. Different strains of the virus produce slightly different clinical signs.

A new study from Brazil suggests that managing a mare's environment to reduce her stress levels after she has been bred can increase the likelihood of a successful pregnancy.

Researchers at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre studied the breeding records of 1,206 Thoroughbred mares over the

course of 10 breeding seasons. Based on how they were managed immediately after they were bred, the mares were divided into two groups: those who were managed in a manner intended to reduce social stresses—such as minimizing or eliminating stall confinement and maintaining herd stability—and those who were not.

A review of the foaling rates

With supportive care, most horses make a full recovery in two weeks or less.

The most recent outbreak was detected when several horses at the Miho Training Center developed high fevers. Out of the 49 affected

horses, 25 were found to be Getah positive with a reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test. A previous outbreak occurred at the same training center in 1978. Researchers say they

of the two groups showed that social stress sometimes seemed to influence whether pregnancy was carried to term. When mares that had not produced a foal the previous year—known as “barren”—were managed to reduce social stress, their pregnancy rate was 7 percent higher than that of barren mares who received no special management. In all, the “low stress” group of barren mares had a pregnancy rate of 91.8 percent, while 84.7 percent of the barren mares in the other group had successful pregnancies.

The researchers conclude that taking steps to reduce social stress in mares immediately following breeding can result in increased foaling rates.

**Reference:** “Management strategies aiming to improve horse welfare reduce embryonic death rates in mares,” *Reproduction in Domestic Animals*, May 2015

do not know what triggered the latest outbreak. ●

**Reference:** “Getah virus infection among racehorses, Japan, 2014,” *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, May 2015

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## SUPPLEMENT STATUS CHECK

Nutritional supplements can play an important role in keeping your horse healthy, but just because a product is appropriate and beneficial for him now, that doesn't mean it will always be. It's a good idea to revisit your horse's situation annually, to determine whether his current supplement is still needed or if he could benefit from a different product or formulation. In

addition, there are three specific occasions that call for reassessing your horse's supplement needs:

- **Change in workload.** A horse whose activity level has increased to that of "athlete" (think endurance racing rather than trail riding) may benefit from a dietary supplement. Hard-working horses might need additional micronutrients<sup>o</sup>, more calories—which can be

achieved with fat supplementation—or electrolytes<sup>o</sup> if they will be sweating heavily in hot weather. Decreases in workload, however, seldom call for the addition of a supplement.

- **New diet.** Many supplements are intended to fill in the "gaps" of a horse's regular ration, so it stands to reason that when you alter your horse's diet, you'll need to revisit his supplement needs. For instance, switching from a straight grain diet (such as traditional rolled oats) to a complete feed may make a vitamin or mineral supplement redundant. On the other hand, if your new hay supply comes from an area with selenium-deficient soil, you may need to add that nutrient to his ration via supplementation.

- **New diagnosis.** If your veterinarian has recently determined that your horse has a disease or another physical condition, you may want to consider a supplement designed to help manage it. The obvious example is arthritis—there are many supplements formulated to support joint health and offset the inflammatory

## POP QUIZ



### MYSTERY MUSCLE

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*For the answer, see page 19.*



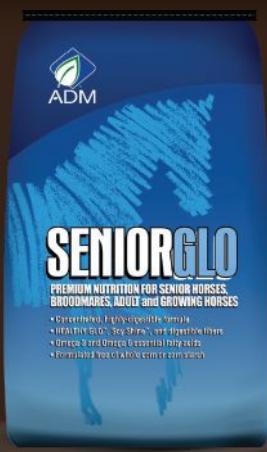
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—Meredith Reed, Placerville, California

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process. Supplements can be beneficial for horses with several other conditions, including shivers<sup>o</sup> and repetitive tying<sup>o</sup> up. On the other hand, in a few cases, a horse's newly diagnosed medical condition may necessitate removing a supplement from his diet. A horse with hyperkalemic<sup>o</sup> periodic paralysis (HYPP), for instance, must not be given any excess potassium.

## WHAT'S BEHIND A YAWN

While standing tied to the rail, waiting to be tacked up, your horse yawns. Then he yawns again ... and then again. By the fourth yawn you start to wonder. Is he tired? Did he swallow a bug? What the heck is going on?

Undoubtedly, some horses yawn because they are tired, just as people

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## WHEN IT'S OK TO DRAG

You may not think a parched pasture landscape baked under a summer sun has much to offer, but there is at least one benefit to dry, hot weather this time of

year: Pasture cleanup is a snap. When temperatures climb above 90 degrees Fahrenheit with no rain for several days in a row, parasite eggs

Keep horses on a different pasture for a week to give the sun time to kill the larvae.

Conversely, dragging during cooler, wetter weather spreads viable parasite eggs around the pasture, contaminating the entire space rather than just the waste areas horses naturally tend to avoid.

If you've been dragging pastures year-round, resolve to instead pick up manure until summer arrives. Then feel free to drag when you get a span of hot, dry days.

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and other mammals do. Likewise, contagious yawns have been observed among horses, with one yawner setting off the entire herd. Equine yawns are also thought to be an emotional response, indicating relaxation or submission. Finally, there's the distinct possibility that yawning equalizes pressure in a horse's ears, as you may have noticed occasionally happens in your own head.

However, not all of the reasons

behind this behavior are benign. Some horses yawn because they are in pain. In addition, repetitive yawning can be a sign of liver disease in both horses and people.

Of course, this doesn't necessarily mean you need to call your veterinarian if you notice your horse yawn more than usual. Instead, do a quick assessment of his health status. Is he running a temperature? Is he well hydrated and interested in eating? Is he showing

any signs of pain or discomfort?

Yawning, when combined with another sign of illness, is cause for a call to your veterinarian. But yawning alone isn't. Simply keep an eye on the horse and if anything else suspicious develops, reassess the situation. ☀

## POP QUIZ **Answer**

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# An elegant repair

Lily's colic surgery went smoothly. The 8-year-old mare had been rushed to Tufts University in Massachusetts with acute gut pain, and exploratory surgery revealed a left dorsal displacement of her large colon. The surgeons corrected the displacement, sutured the incision in the mare's abdomen and sent her home a few days later.

That's when the complications began. "When you're opening and closing an abdomen, there's a lot that can go wrong," says Jose Garcia-Lopez, VMD, DACVS. "There are multiple layers of muscle to suture, along an incision line that can be 40 centimeters long. Then, after you're done, the horse stands up, and gravity puts hundreds of pounds of viscera right on the incision you've just sutured. To put it in context, imagine if after you had major abdominal surgery, your doctor told you to get on all fours and crawl around. That's exactly what we ask horses to do."

That's why hernias—the protrusion of an organ or body tissue through an opening in the abdominal wall—are a relatively common complication of colic surgery. Surgeons have developed a variety of techniques to suture incisions as securely as possible, but hernias still develop in 10 to 20 percent of horses. "Surgical hernias occur when the linea alba, the fibrous band of tissue that runs along the midline, fails at the site of the incision," says Garcia-Lopez. "Infection increases the risk of this happening, but it can happen in a healthy wound, too. Essentially, the abdominal wall pulls apart at a weak spot, creating a pouch of sorts."

That pouch can then fill with fluid and expand, creating space for

**The solution to a mare's recurring post-surgical hernia is a new technique that uses an ancient fiber.**

By Christine Barakat



abdominal structures to slip in. "What you see from the outside is a bulge along the midline," says Garcia-Lopez. "If you touch it, it will usually feel soft."

Some hernias are inconsequential—they may look unpleasant, but they do no harm to the horse. "Many times the bulge is created by a small piece of fat or omentum<sup>®</sup> that slips down into the pouch," says Garcia-Lopez. "That isn't too worrisome." A horse with a benign hernia may even be ridden, although a pendulous bulge may interfere with more athletic efforts.

Other hernias, however, can be quite dangerous. "If a portion of bowel or intestine slips down into the space, particularly through a small opening, it can become strangulated, with the blood

cut off, and begin to die," says Garcia-Lopez. "Then you've got a potentially deadly colic emergency on your hands."

Hernias can usually be corrected surgically, although it may not be necessary if the abnormality poses no harm to the horse. Typically, a veterinarian will examine the bulge with ultrasound to determine its contents to assess any potential dangers. "Most owners, in my experience, opt to repair hernias," says Garcia-Lopez. "It does involve another surgery, but in many ways that is better than worrying about what might happen down the road."

## A failed fix

A fist-size bulge appeared along Lily's midline within weeks of her colic surgery, prompting her owners to call in their regular veterinarian. "Her owners still rode her regularly and were planning on using her as a broodmare," says Garcia-Lopez. "They weren't worried about aesthetics, but they were concerned about what might happen with the hernia through pregnancies."

After conferring with their veterinarian, Lily's owners agreed to a hernia repair procedure done on the farm. The mare was anesthetized and laid down in a clean grassy area. The veterinarian then reopened the failed incision line, repositioned the bulging tissues and sutured the abdomen closed once again. Lily woke from the anesthetic and stood up without any complications.

To help prevent a recurrence, the veterinarian outfitted Lily with a hernia belt. "These are stretchy belly wraps that secure with strong Velcro," says Garcia-Lopez. "They are cut to particular sizes to fit certain measurements

and fit very tightly. These wraps are essentially corsets that you leave on a horse for several weeks after the surgery. Studies have shown that using them immediately post-surgery can reduce the stress on the incision line as well as the amount of edema or swelling present, which, potentially, reduces the risk of a hernia."

For a time, the repair seemed to have worked. But when the hernia belt was removed, the defect in the incision line slowly reappeared. Within months, another bulge emerged in the exact same location. Frustrated, but determined to

was to wait about six months from when the hernia reoccurred before attempting another repair.

"When you repair a hernia, you want a very, thick fibrous ring of scar tissue around the defect," he says. "The thicker it is, the better able it will be to hold the new sutures. I think that may have contributed to the first repair failure—it was simply done too soon. I told [Lily's owners] we needed to wait for the scar tissue to form, and then we could attempt another repair." They agreed, loaded the mare and headed back home to wait.

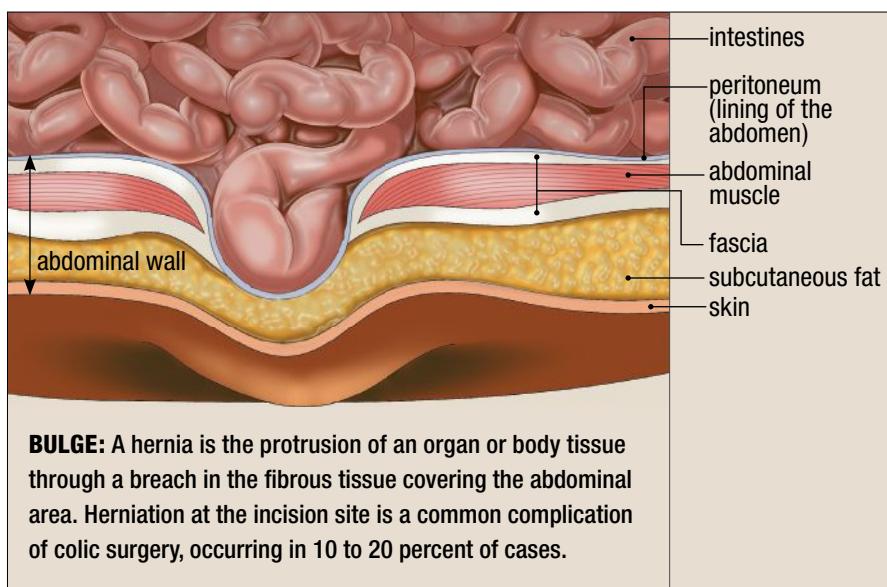
risk of complications. "Historically, polyester and polypropylene meshes have been used," says Garcia-Lopez. "They are good and strong, but they last forever as a foreign substance in the body, and if an infection develops, you have to remove all of it as part of the treatment."

However, Garcia-Lopez had been working with a research group in the development of a new type of mesh made with silk. "Silk mesh is conducive to bringing new fibroblasts into the area, which leads to the growth of fibrous tissue," he says. "As this is happening, the silk deteriorates, so ultimately it is replaced by native tissue. Treating infections doesn't necessitate removing the silk mesh, either. Silk has been around for centuries, obviously, but only in the last decade or so have we known how to weave it together to be strong enough for surgical applications such as this."

Prior to Lily, Garcia-Lopez had used silk mesh in surgical trials on sheep, and he had conducted a few preliminary trials in horses, but he hadn't yet used it on a large and persistent hernia. However, the mare's owners agreed it was worth a try, and the surgery was scheduled for the following day.

With Lily fully anesthetized and positioned on the surgical table, Garcia-Lopez cut a two-inch-wide elliptical-shaped incision to the right of the hernia on her midline. He then carefully separated the muscular layers of the body wall to examine the tissue around the hernia.

"You have to take into consideration how much you'll be able to pull the body wall back together, given the strength of the area and the amount of fibrous tissue you have to work with," says Garcia-Lopez. By manually manipulating the tissues, he was able to reduce the size of the hernia to about



**BULGE:** A hernia is the protrusion of an organ or body tissue through a breach in the fibrous tissue covering the abdominal area. Herniation at the incision site is a common complication of colic surgery, occurring in 10 to 20 percent of cases.

help their mare, Lily's owners loaded her up and headed back to Tufts.

Once she arrived, Garcia-Lopez conducted a complete examination of the mare. But beyond the bulge in her midline—about three inches long and one-and-a-half inches wide—Lily was in good health and spirits. Although the ultrasound did reveal large bowel within the hernia, there was no evidence of immediate danger of an intestinal strangulation. This was good news, Garcia-Lopez explained to Lily's owners, because the best approach to the problem

## Silky solution

When Lily returned to Tufts two months later, says Garcia-Lopez, "the ring of scar tissue around the hernia appeared thick enough on ultrasound to hold more sutures." However, the veterinarian also offered the mare's owners an alternative—to try out a new, still-experimental method of repair.

In human medicine, plastic or reconstructive surgeons may suture a flexible mesh into the tissues to help provide strong support for healing with reduced



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CONTRAINDICATIONS: Horses with hypersensitivity to clodronate disodium should not receive OSPHOS.

WARNINGS: Do not use in horses intended for human consumption.

HUMAN WARNINGS: Not for human use. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children. Consult a physician in case of accidental human exposure.

PRECAUTIONS: As a class, bisphosphonates may be associated with gastrointestinal and renal toxicity. Sensitivity to drug associated adverse reactions varies with the individual patient. Renal and gastrointestinal adverse reactions may be associated with plasma concentrations of the drug. Bisphosphonates are excreted by the kidney; therefore, conditions causing renal impairment may increase plasma bisphosphonate concentrations resulting in an increased risk for adverse reactions. Concurrent administration of other potentially nephrotoxic drugs should be approached with caution and renal function should be monitored. Use of bisphosphonates in patients with conditions or diseases affecting renal function is not recommended. Administration of bisphosphonates has been associated with abdominal pain (colic), discomfort, and agitation in horses. Clinical signs usually occur shortly after drug administration and may be associated with alterations in intestinal motility. In horses treated with OSPHOS these clinical signs usually began within 2 hours of treatment. Horses should be monitored for at least 2 hours following administration of OSPHOS.

Bisphosphonates affect plasma concentrations of some minerals and electrolytes such as calcium, magnesium and potassium, immediately post-treatment, with effects lasting up to several hours. Caution should be used when administering bisphosphonates to horses with conditions affecting mineral or electrolyte homeostasis (e.g. hyperkalemic periodic paralysis, hypocalcemia, etc.).

The safe use of OSPHOS has not been evaluated in horses less than 4 years of age. The effect of bisphosphonates on the skeleton of growing horses has not been studied; however, bisphosphonates inhibit osteoclast activity which impacts bone turnover and may affect bone growth.

Bisphosphonates should not be used in pregnant or lactating mares, or mares intended for breeding. The safe use of OSPHOS has not been evaluated in breeding horses or pregnant or lactating mares. Bisphosphonates are incorporated into the bone matrix, from where they are gradually released over periods of months to years. The extent of bisphosphonate incorporation into adult bone, and hence, the amount available for release back into the systemic circulation, is directly related to the total dose and duration of bisphosphonate use. Bisphosphonates have been shown to cause fetal developmental abnormalities in laboratory animals. The uptake of bisphosphonates into fetal bone may be greater than into maternal bone creating a possible risk for skeletal or other abnormalities in the fetus. Many drugs, including bisphosphonates, may be excreted in milk and may be absorbed by nursing animals.

Increased bone fragility has been observed in animals treated with bisphosphonates at high doses or for long periods of time. Bisphosphonates inhibit bone resorption and decrease bone turnover which may lead to an inability to repair micro damage within the bone. In humans, atypical femur fractures have been reported in patients on long term bisphosphonate therapy; however, a causal relationship has not been established.

ADVERSE REACTIONS: The most common adverse reactions reported in the field study were clinical signs of discomfort or nervousness, colic and/or pawing. Other signs reported were lip licking, yawning, head shaking, injection site swelling, and hives/ pruritus.

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# HERNIAS IN HORSES

## Abdominal hernias,

the unnatural protrusion of intestine or other tissues through an opening in the body, can develop from several causes. Some are secondary to trauma, including postoperative hernias, which occur when abdominal contents press through an incompletely healed incision site in the abdominal wall. Horses can also develop hernias from natural causes. Two types of congenital hernia are most common:

## Umbilical hernias

may occur when the umbilical ring—the dense, fibrous tissue that surrounds the umbilicus—fails to close properly after the foal is born. Swelling may appear at the foal's navel within the first few weeks of life. Smaller hernias, of less than three centimeters, may resolve without treatment as the foal grows. Your veterinarian may recommend manually massaging the contents of the hernia back up into the abdomen each day until the ring closes on its own. If the hernia is still

present after six months, or if it is large and protuberant to start with, surgical closure may be necessary.

## Inguinal hernias

occur in one of the inguinal canals—natural openings in the abdominal wall where blood vessels, nerves and other structures pass through to the structures of the groin, including the testes in male horses and the udders in mares. When abdominal tissues extend into the testes, they may also be called scrotal hernias. Inguinal hernias can occur as congenital defects in foals or in mares who experience difficulty giving birth or other trauma, but they are most common as a complication following castration. Surgical correction is usually required.

Another, rarer, form of abdominal hernia is **diaphragmatic**—when the intestines, stomach or other tissues may protrude into the thoracic cavity through tears or defects in the diaphragm, the muscular partition that separates the heart and lungs from the

digestive organs. This can occur where the esophagus passes through to the stomach (called a hiatal hernia) or through a tear resulting from trauma. Surgical repair of a diaphragmatic hernia is possible, especially if the defect is small and the damage to the intestines is minimal. But the prognosis is generally poor: In one study of 44 horses admitted to either the New Bolton Center at the University of Pennsylvania or the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center in Leesburg, Virginia, 18 died or were euthanized prior to surgery, and only five survived one year post-surgery. In another study of 31 horses admitted to Hagyard Equine Medical Institute in Lexington, Kentucky, and the University of California-Davis Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital, only 46 percent (six of 13) who underwent surgery survived to discharge, for an overall survival rate of 23 percent for those diagnosed with the condition.

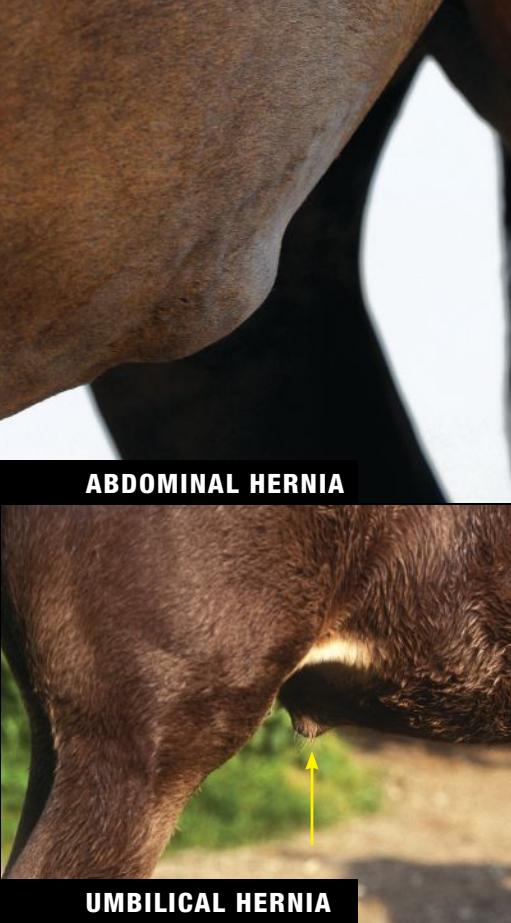
two inches. Next, he stretched the silk mesh across the gap, anchoring it within the layers of muscle tissue in the abdominal wall. He then sutured the outer layers of skin closed and placed a tight hernia band on the mare before waking her up.

"There's always a moment of worry as the horse scrambles back to its feet," says Garcia-Lopez. "That can pull all your work apart immediately." But

between the silk mesh and the hernia belt, Lily's hernia repair remained strong for the three days she stayed at the clinic for continued observation. She also received treatment with antibiotics and anti-inflammatories.

"The belt offers support but also reduces edema in the area," says Garcia-Lopez. "If you can keep the edema down, there is less stretching of the tissues." Lily's hernia belt

DUSTY PERIN



ABDOMINAL HERNIA



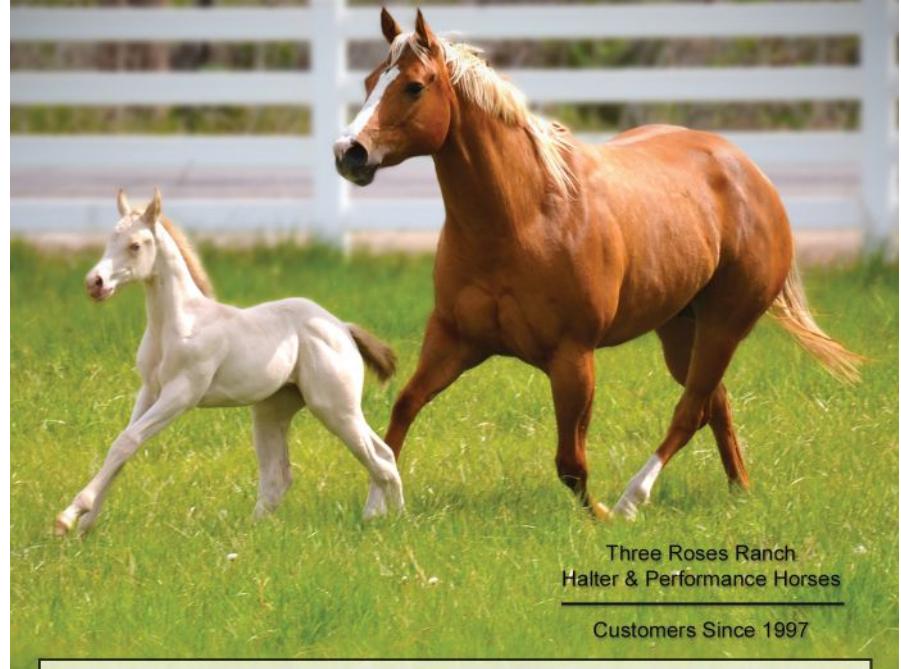
UMBILICAL HERNIA

remained in place after she went home; it was removed only for short periods each day for grooming and adjustment. The mare returned to Tufts for two follow-up exams, at eight and 20 weeks after her surgery.

At each visit, ultrasound examinations showed that the mesh was holding strong and fibrous tissue was quickly forming around it. Externally, Lily's midline remained flat and smooth, with no sign of a returning bulge. After the second visit, the hernia belt was removed for good, and the repair continued holding strong.

Lily went on to fulfill her new role as a broodmare. "We were fortunate to be able to keep track of her," says Garcia-Lopez. "She had at least two foals, one of which had to come into the clinic for a small problem. We were able to take a close look at her then and saw no issues at all with her hernia. Two foals later, she still looked great. There's no reason to think it won't hold forever." ☀

# BALANCE YOUR HORSE'S HAY DIET FOR OPTIMAL GROWTH

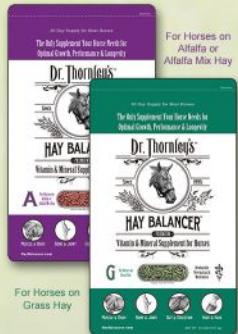


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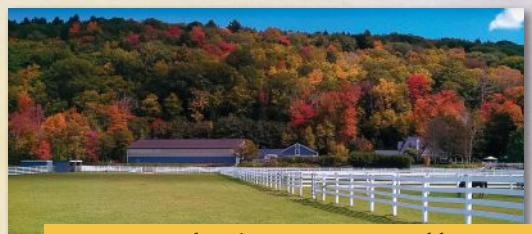
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he trots the air; the earth sings when he  
touches it; the basest horn of his hoof is  
more musical than the pipe of Hermes.”*  
—William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

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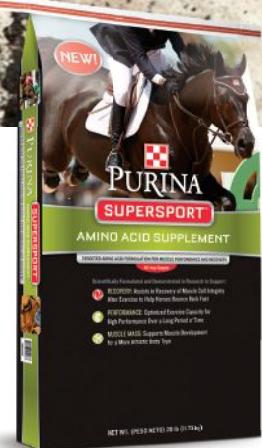
The **Trifecta ¼ Zip Top** (suggested retail, \$64.95), from SmartPak, offers multiple levels of summer protection, including InsectShield to repel bugs, a UPF (ultraviolet protection factor) rating of 50+ and an antimicrobial finish to control odors. The shirt is made of a moisture-wicking polyester and spandex blend with mesh panels along the sides and upper back to maximize ventilation. Other features include a dropped back hem and thumbholes in the wrist cuffs. Available in dark magenta, gray or white, in sizes XS to XL. Visit [www.smartpak.com](http://www.smartpak.com) or call 1-800-461-8898.

The **Karleigh Short Sleeve V-Neck** (suggested retail, \$28.99), from Noble Outfitters, is made of a moisture-wicking blend of polyester and spandex with a stretch-mesh back panel for added breathability. The shirt also features a dropped back hem and flat seam construction for a smooth fit. Available in vivacious heather, heather gray, aqua sky heather or wine heather, in sizes XS to XXL. Visit [www.nobleoutfitters.com](http://www.nobleoutfitters.com).





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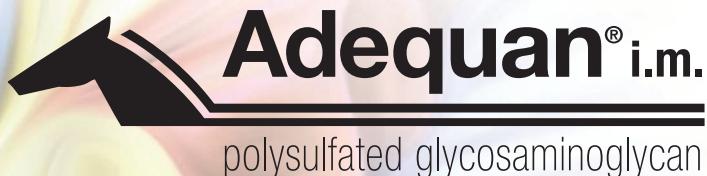
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**LUITPOLD**  
ANIMAL HEALTH

# Taming a trail terror

To head off problems on the trail, make sure your leadership and connection with your horse are solid while you are still at home.

By Jonathan Field  
Photos by Robin Duncan

**Q:** *My mare is a pleasure to ride in the arena, but when we hit the trails, she does not play well with others. She tries to kick and bite neighbors that invade her space, and she'll even lunge at horses who come up alongside or back up to kick at a horse behind her. I've tried to discipline her in the moment, but nothing seems to get through. She also gets aggressive no matter where she is in the line, whether we're leading, in the middle or bringing up the rear. I hit the trails solo sometimes, but my barn is full of friendly riders*

*who like to organize group rides. How can I get my mare to behave around the others on the trail?*

**T**hanks for your question. I'll share some general ideas that may help and then offer tips for handling the situation the next time you go out on the trail.

When I take riders and large groups of students out on the trail at our ranch, we often have a mix of a lot of different horses. The key for a successful ride is to set the group up at the home ranch ahead of time. This means making sure each rider's leadership and connection with her horse are



solid before the group starts mixing together on the trail.

On trail rides, many horses like to “herd up,” focusing on one another rather than their riders. The momentum that develops as a group of horses goes down the trail makes it easy for them to sync up with each other. When this happens, they behave as they naturally would in the herds: biting, kicking and trying to establish social position.

Keep in mind that when it comes to dominance, there are two sides of the coin. One is the desire to establish rank in the hierarchy; the other involves defending space and position. It is possible that your mare feels overwhelmed and crowded out on the trail, so she is trying to “get” the other horses before they “get” her. Either way, her attention is focused in the wrong direction—toward the herd and not you.

To keep this from happening, you need to establish a high level of leadership with your horse. I describe this as “taking your horse for a ride” rather than being “taken for a ride.” In other words, don’t be passive or tentative with your horse. Instead, ride with purpose and make it clear that you will be directing movement and activity.

That doesn’t mean that you have to become a drill sergeant but rather act as a focused leader with things to do. When I was a working cowboy we always had a place to go, and because of that our horses focused on us. It was a good lesson for me. I learned that a horse could tell where my focus was. Is it with him or with the other riders and my social agenda?

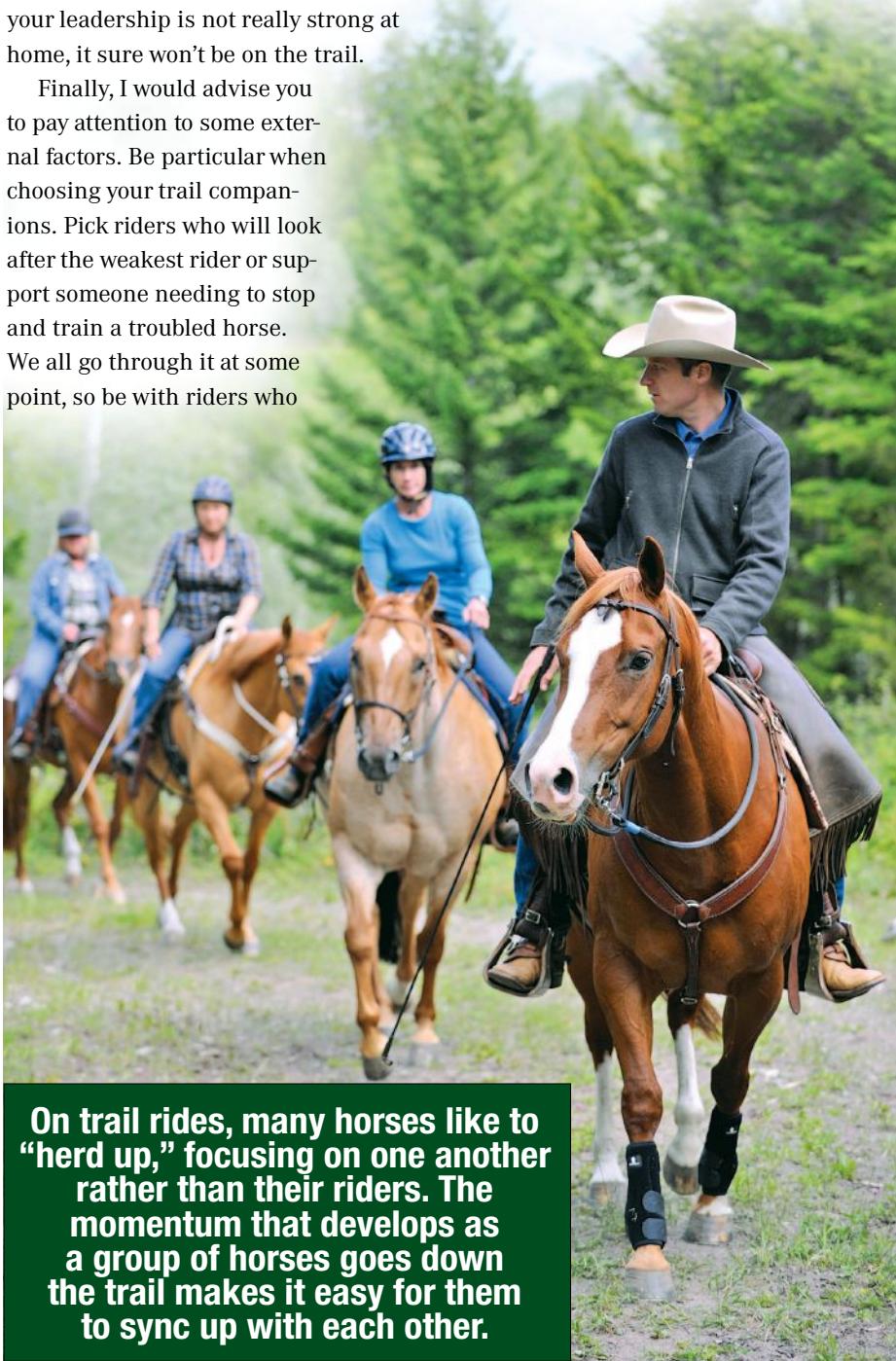
Depending on your general relationship with your mare, it may take some time and effort to make sure you maintain your leadership when you leave your home ground and go out on the trails. But be sure you’ve prepared

a strong connection with her before heading out. Plan to ride your mare for at least 20 minutes before a trail ride. Trot some circles, do lots of upward and downward transitions, and direct your mare’s movement to get her ears and eyes focused on you. Remember, if your leadership is not really strong at home, it sure won’t be on the trail.

Finally, I would advise you to pay attention to some external factors. Be particular when choosing your trail companions. Pick riders who will look after the weakest rider or support someone needing to stop and train a troubled horse. We all go through it at some point, so be with riders who

will do the same thing you would do for them if they needed extra support.

When I talk to students about going out on the trails, I remind them that horses aren’t all-terrain vehicles you can ride anywhere without worrying about what you encounter. If we don’t



**On trail rides, many horses like to “herd up,” focusing on one another rather than their riders. The momentum that develops as a group of horses goes down the trail makes it easy for them to sync up with each other.**

# ARE YOU DEWORMING YOUR HORSE TOO OFTEN?



If you're deworming your horse six times a year, it could be as much as four times too often. In fact, the one-size-fits-all approach of deworming every two months is obsolete, according to the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP).<sup>1</sup> In many cases, two treatments may be all your horse needs.

## DIFFERENT PARASITE CHALLENGES

The concept of routine deworming started more than 40 years ago, when large strongyles were the predominant internal parasite in horses. Small strongyles are more common in horses today, but require properly timed, effective treatments instead of routine treatment.

## FREQUENT DEWORMING CAN CAUSE RESISTANCE

When parasites are overexposed to certain treatments, they can become resistant to them. And that leaves horse owners with fewer options. Small strongyles have been shown to develop widespread resistance to fenbendazole,<sup>2</sup> one of the older dewormers.

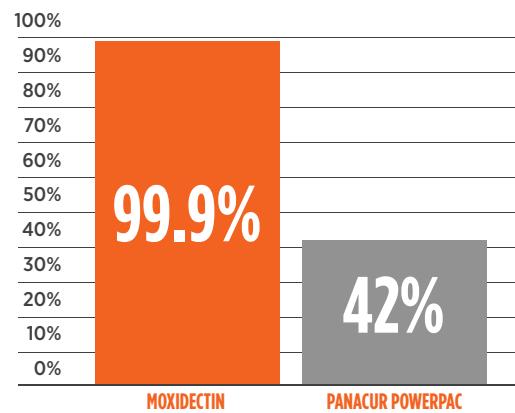
## AN INDIVIDUALIZED DEWORMING<sup>™</sup> PLAN

Because every horse is unique, new AAEP guidelines<sup>1</sup> recommend that you work with your veterinarian to tailor a parasite control plan to your horse. Based on your horse's age, fecal egg count results and parasite exposure risks, the plan should include effective deworming products administered during peak parasite seasons.

## CHOOSE AN EFFECTIVE DEWORMER

With just one dose, QUEST<sup>®</sup> PLUS (moxidectin/praziquantel) Gel treats and controls encysted small strongyle larvae, bots and tapeworms. Compare that with Panacur<sup>®</sup> Powerpac, which requires a double dose every day for five days and still doesn't treat bots and tapeworms. And a recent study showed moxidectin reduced fecal egg counts by 99.9%. Panacur Powerpac was only 42% effective.<sup>3</sup>\*

### EFFECTIVENESS AGAINST SMALL STRONGYLES\*



TO DETERMINE YOUR HORSE'S INDIVIDUAL PARASITE RISK PROFILE, VISIT [IDMYHORSE.COM](http://IDMYHORSE.COM).

**IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:** Do not use QUEST Gel or QUEST PLUS Gel in foals less than 6 months of age or in sick, debilitated and underweight horses. These products should not be used in other animal species, as severe adverse reactions, including fatalities in dogs, may result.

<sup>1</sup> American Association of Equine Practitioners. AAEP Parasite Control Guidelines. Available at: <http://www.aaep.org/custdocs/ParasiteControlGuidelinesFinal.pdf>. Updated 2013. Accessed January 12, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Kaplan RM. Anthelmintic resistance in nematodes of horses. *Vet Res* 2002;33:491-507.

<sup>3</sup> Mason ME, Voris ND, Ortis HA, Geeding AA, Kaplan RM. Comparison of a single dose of moxidectin and a five-day course of fenbendazole to reduce and suppress cyathostomin fecal egg counts in a herd of embryo transfer-recipient mares. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2014;245(8):944-951.

\*This study compared QUEST (moxidectin) Gel with Panacur Powerpac (fenbendazole).

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have a high level of awareness of what's around our horses, they will. Even if we just want to go see the sights and visit with friends, we still need to be aware and ready to react. This sounds like a lot in the beginning ... and it is. But eventually you will be able to be a good leader for your horse, take in the sights, and tell stories about how tough she used to be.

## Once you're out on the trail

Here are some strategies for maintaining your mare's focus and staying safe on the trail:

- **Make a point of changing your mare's position among the other horses several times during the ride.** Take the lead for a while, then move to a position at the end of the line. After some time, go to the middle of the queue. Asking your mare to take different positions

will help keep her focused on you rather than the other horses.

- **When your mare misbehaves, redirect her attention, giving her something else to think about.** This is a far better approach than trying to discipline (punish) her for bad behavior, which may backfire. Instead, focus on taking her in a positive direction. The more my horse focuses on his surroundings, the busier I get with him, moving his feet and directing his energy where I want it to go.

- **Don't allow your mare to simply go single file, right up behind the next horse in line.** If you do, she will naturally take her cues from that horse instead of you. Make it clear that she must listen to you rather than simply following the other horses. Take her to the side and start moving with her a few moments after everyone does or just before they begin—this will reinforce the fact that you, not they, are in charge.

- **When it's time to stop for a break, move your mare off to the edge of the group and be mindful of her personal space sensitivities.**

- **Be aware of "bumper car" riders who have no understanding or awareness of a horse's need for space.** They may not realize what a horse will do if he feels confined. Don't get kicked or let someone put your horse in a position to kick or be kicked. ●

**About the author:** Jonathan Field is a trainer and clinician from Abbotsford, British Columbia. His program, Jonathan Field Horsemanship: Inspired by Horses, teaches the skills necessary to build a relationship with horses. Field grew up riding both English and Western and worked as a cowboy on one of the largest cattle ranches in Canada. Field regularly does presentations at events like the Western States Horse Expo in Sacramento, California.



**Make a point of changing your horse's position among the other horses several times during the ride. Asking him to take different positions will help keep him focused on you rather than the other horses.**



*Don't let it  
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Stop making things hard on yourself and your horse. With just one dose, QUEST<sup>®</sup> PLUS (moxidectin/praziquantel) Gel treats and controls encysted small strongyle larvae, bots and tapeworms. Compare that with Panacur<sup>®</sup> Powerpac, which requires a double dose every day for five days and still doesn't treat bots or tapeworms. And a recent study showed moxidectin reduced fecal egg counts by 99.9%. Panacur Powerpac was only 42% effective.<sup>1,\*</sup> QUEST PLUS: The Power of One. [QuestHorse.com](http://QuestHorse.com)

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# WHEN HORSE THEFT IS *NOT* A “CRIME”

Your horse has vanished and someone else is responsible. But if the police deem the case a civil matter, recovering your horse will be much more difficult, if not impossible. **Don't let this happen to you.**

By Debi Metcalfe

Phone calls went unanswered. Messages weren't returned. Undaunted, Jill Black repeatedly called her close friend, who was caring for her two horses while she was away. Days passed. Finally, Black got a response, but it was not the one she was expecting: Her horses were dead, both killed in a horrible storm.

She reeled in disbelief. Dead? How could both horses be dead?

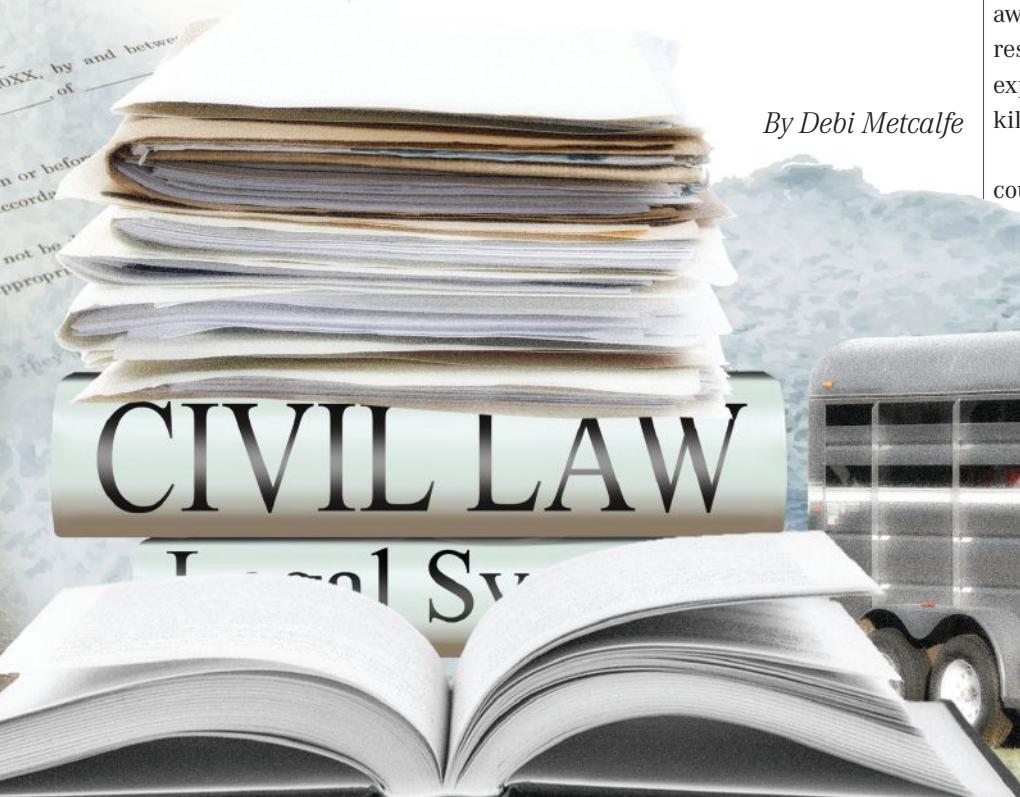


PHOTO: ILLUSTRATION BY CELIA STRAIN

Five months earlier, in January 2013, Black had relocated from North Carolina to North Dakota, and she had left her two geldings, Shatan and Sony, with a friend in North Carolina until she could find a place to keep them. Now, finally settled into a new home, Black was trying to reach her friend to make arrangements to transport the horses when she got the bad news.

Suspecting something wasn't right, Black sent a veterinarian to her friend's property to confirm the story, but he was blocked from entering. Next, she called the sheriff's department, and some important details of the case were quickly flushed out. Shatan and Sony weren't dead. Her friend, who was being paid to care for them, instead sold them just weeks after they arrived at her farm.

"I was devastated, and I could not eat or sleep, telling myself it was my fault for leaving them," says Black. And, she adds, "I wanted something done. This person committed a crime by selling [my] horses without my permission."

But the local law enforcement provided no help. Black was told her case did not involve theft

because the person who sold the horses had legal possession of them. Instead, she says, the authorities told her it was a

civil matter, and there was nothing they could do. If she wanted her horses back, she was told, Black would have to sue and take her case to court.

While it might seem obvious to you that a person who sells your horse without your permission has, in effect, stolen him, that's not always the case. "Civil theft" is, legally speaking, quite different than criminal theft, which is the type of crime that occurs when someone cuts your fence and removes

a horse from your property without permission. In the latter, there is a clear delineation between the criminal and the victim. A civil matter, in contrast, is considered a dispute between two honest people. If the police decide your case is civil, rightfully or not, they will decline to treat it as a crime.

Getting your horse back after a civil theft is possible, but it can be difficult and expensive, and you need to take the right steps from the beginning to improve your chances of success. Your better bet is to take measures to not let it happen to you. Here's what you need to know.

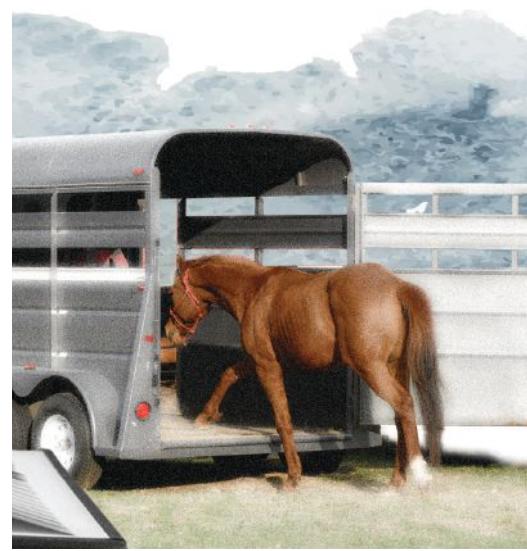
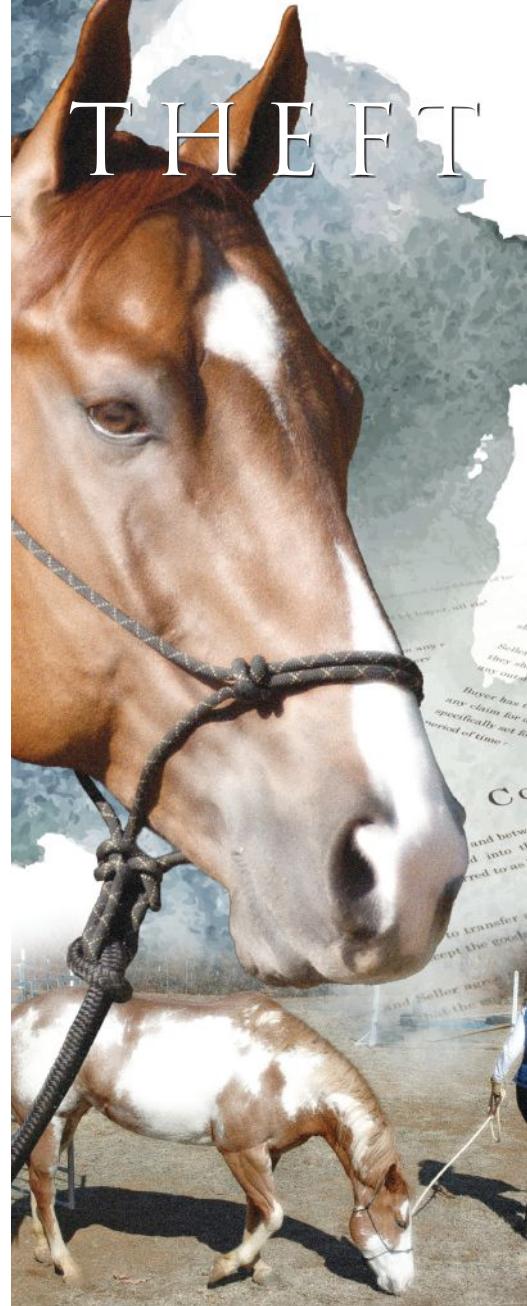
## CIVIL VERSUS CRIMINAL

What exactly is "civil theft"? The answer depends on whom you talk to and where you live. Right now, Florida is the only state that has a civil theft statute, which includes the definition, "obtaining or using the property of the Plaintiff by taking or exercising control over property" and "making that an unauthorized use, disposition, or transfer of property." In other words, civil theft

**Civil theft occurs when someone who has legal access to your horse takes him or sells him without your permission.**

occurs when someone who has legal access to your horse takes him or sells him without your permission.

This isn't uncommon. "As an active horse owner myself, I had heard stories time and again from horse owners: 'I left my horse at a boarding facility ... with a friend ... with a trainer ... and the horses went missing,'" says former paralegal Pamela Garron of Sanford, North Carolina. For example, a horse may be sold by an angry spouse or



# IS NOT A "CRIME"

another family member. The perpetrators might claim that they have a right to hold and/or sell your horse, especially if they believe you owe them money.

Often, whether a case is treated as criminal or civil comes down to the response from law enforcement. From your perspective as the "victim," you may want the police to arrest the "perpetrator" immediately and return your horse to you. At the very least, you want them to treat your case as a crime and investigate it accordingly. But consider

wrongfully, the police will be unable to prosecute the case as a crime, and they may decline to pursue the investigation any further.

And, sometimes, the police may just not want to be bothered. The majority of those serving their communities take their oath in the pursuit of justice seriously. But, as the founder and president of Stolen Horse International, a nonprofit group that offers resources to help people find and recover horses who have been lost, stolen or missing

enforcement to treat your case like a criminal action. Here's what to do:

- **Call the police right away.** Your call will trigger a police report—a written record of your complaint—and launch an investigation. Even if you know who is responsible for the disappearance of your horse, this step is critical to establishing your case. As you describe the situation to the officer who responds, stick to the facts and avoid making personal attacks against other people.



## Call the police right away. Your call will trigger a police report—a written record of your complaint—and launch an investigation. This step is critical to establishing your case.

the perspective of the investigating officers, who are faced with two people, both claiming—correctly or not—they have ownership rights to the same horse. If both parties have any degree of legitimacy—or even if they can just convince the police that they do—law enforcement may back off and declare it a civil matter.

Many times, it comes down to your ability to prove your case. If you cannot present indisputable evidence that the horse was taken from your custody

for any reason, I have encountered many people in law enforcement who simply don't want to deal with "a horse case" or don't have the expertise to do so. You may have to pursue your case as a civil matter regardless.

## IF IT HAPPENS TO YOU

The moment you realize your horse isn't where you think he's supposed to be, your first actions are critical to establishing your rights and gaining the cooperation of your local law

• **Press for a higher authority.** If the first officer you talk to says it's not a criminal case, don't stop there. "Just because this guy rolls out of his patrol car and tells you there's nothing he can do, that is not necessarily the end of it," says Robert Jordan, former director of the Mississippi Agricultural & Livestock Theft Bureau. "That guy has people he answers to, and if you think he has wronged you, do not be intimidated by that uniform and the car he is driving."

# WHEN HORSE THEFT

## CASE STUDY

### WHEN A THEFT IS BOTH CIVIL AND CRIMINAL

Can a case be civil and criminal at the same time? Yes.

Rod Vilencia's saga began in 1993 when a sales deal went haywire. Vilencia had been boarding his filly Ariel with a woman for more than a year when he discovered that she had taken his horse and moved. He agreed to accept a payment arrangement to sell Ariel to the woman if she would sign a purchase agreement and send it back with her first payment.

They made the verbal agreement via phone, and Vilencia then sent her the written purchase agreement and a photocopy of the registration papers that belonged to the filly's mother, proof that the horse was out of purebred stock.

He then waited for her to make her first payment and return the purchase contract. Time passed, the purchase agreement never arrived and she failed to return his calls. Eventually her phone was disconnected.

Vilencia reported the incident to law enforcement, but both the woman and the horse had vanished. He

continued his search for Ariel, and the woman who took her, for more than a decade. Nearly 11 years later, Vilencia was shaken by a bad dream that woke him up in the middle of the night. He felt compelled to go to the computer and search one more time, and suddenly, there on a website was his missing Ariel—still in possession of the woman who had taken her.

Now what? Vilencia called

found incriminating evidence to be used against the woman in the prosecution of the case, including the original contract that was signed by her but never returned with payment and the other paperwork that Vilencia had sent to her in the summer of 1993.

The woman surrendered and was booked into the county jail on suspicion of three felonies related to theft, forgery

he started legal proceedings and six months after Vilencia brought his horses home, the woman pleaded guilty to felony forgery in the first degree in order to avoid a trial in the stolen horse and forgery case that the state had against her.

Was this the happy ending? No! The nightmare continued when the courts allowed the woman to sue Vilencia in civil court. How can a convicted felon sue the victim, and for what? In laymen's terms, she sued for undue use of the justice system, attorney's fees and—believe it or not—back board for 11 years. She didn't win.

"The woman lost in arbitration to me and then because she lost she forced the case forward to a 12-person jury trial," Vilencia says. "With the judge's redefining



the breed registry and was infuriated to find out the woman had also stolen his name and signature. She had used the photocopy of the paperwork on Ariel's mother to create fake documents, and she had forged his name and signature to fraudulently register the horse in 2002.

Vilencia needed help, and an Internet search brought him to Stolen Horse International. The help he needed to keep him grounded and focused began that morning.

In December 2004 a search warrant was served on the suspect at her ranch. Officers

**BAD DEAL:** After 13 years, Ariel (above) was returned to her rightful owner, Rod Vilencia (right). But Vilencia estimates that his legal bills and other expenses amounted to more than \$60,000.

and computer crimes and the misdemeanor offense of unauthorized use of someone else's livestock.

In September 2005, a court finally awarded Vilencia temporary custody of Ariel and two of her offspring. In April 2006, 13 years after his horse was taken, 13 months after



of the jury's actual verdict she lost the entire case to me and became responsible for repaying me all of my expenses, which amounted to \$500 plus all of my expenses from the arbitration forward, an additional \$60,000. I never pursued her for the money as I knew that she would never pay me."

# IS NOT A "CRIME"

Persistence can pay, but you do need to be tactful. "Find out who the supervisor is or who the sheriff is or who the chief of police is and call them," says Jordan, who before his retirement in 2013 supervised criminal investigators in the detection and prevention of agricultural crimes, including horse thefts. "Usually a reasonable person who has been around for a while will see if he can help you."

• **Keep it polite.** No matter how solid your case is, you can hurt your chances of succeeding if you behave badly and alienate the people whose help you need, Jordan says: "You don't call snorting and bucking and cussing and all that."

• **Be truthful and cooperative with the investigator.** Providing false or misleading information in an attempt to get a result faster can only hurt you in the long run, if the investigating officer becomes suspicious of your motives.

Jordan says that a case can be declared a civil matter quite easily during the investigation. "Usually [the accuser is] going to tell you it is someone they know. They are going to tell you that right off the bat because they want you to go get them," he says. "We are going to talk to the other guy, too, and the truth is going to be somewhere in the middle, usually. Neither one of them may be doing things just right."

## SEE YOU IN COURT?

If your horse's disappearing act has been deemed a civil matter, then your only hope of getting him back is to take legal action. In other words, you'll have to sue the perpetrator in a civil court and present enough evidence to convince a judge and/or jury that you've been wronged. This can be a long, expensive process.

## FAST TIPS FOR A CIVIL CASE

"The best time for a lawyer to give advice is before the horse is involved in a civil situation," says equine attorney R.L. Adams, of Chapel Hill, North

Carolina. He offers these basic rules to help you in case you are ever involved in a civil case:

- There is no such thing as too much documentation. Have an attorney prepare contracts.
- Exercise suspicion toward those you become involved with in deals. Many people will ignore their gut intuition. Learn to listen to it.
- The best way to prove ownership is with some form of permanent equine identification, such as a registered microchip, freeze brand, tattoo, etc.
- Other paperwork such as breed registration, bill of sale, veterinary records, farrier records, Coggins papers and health certificates are helpful to have on hand.
- When talking to law enforcement, be calm. The officer is trying to help you. Don't make his job harder.



First, you will need to hire an attorney. Seek one who specializes in equine law and is familiar with the industry practices. Just because someone is an attorney and owns or rides a horse, that doesn't make him qualified to handle your equine legal case.

When you, the plaintiff, file a complaint, the defendant is served with a warrant. The sheriff's department or a process server can be utilized. Your attorney should know the laws to make sure the correct procedure is followed. Once the defendant is served they will file their answer to your complaint or possibly file a motion to dismiss the lawsuit. Remember, the opposing counsel's job is to dispute your claims.

After the answer is filed, the discovery process begins. During this phase, representatives from both sides gather evidence to support their respective claims, and facts may be exposed that will weaken one or both parties' arguments. While not a guarantee, the

**When you sue the perpetrator in a civil court you must present enough evidence to convince a judge and/or jury that you've been wronged. This can be a long, expensive process.**

# WHEN HORSE THEFT

parties can agree to a settlement during a lawsuit at any time, even during trial, if it gets to that point.

At any point during the suit, the parties can agree to submit their case to alternative dispute resolution (ADR), which refers to any form of meeting with a third party, such as a mediator, to come to an agreement without going to trial. In fact, some courts may require cases to go to ADR before trial, although in others it's voluntary. One option for ADR is arbitration—which is like a simplified version of a trial in which the plaintiff and defendant present their evidence before a panel of arbitrators, who will hear the evidence and issue a decision. A binding decision is final. If the decision is nonbinding, then either party has a specified length of time to appeal and take the case to trial. Typically, the process is faster and somewhat less expensive than formal litigation.

Another type of ADR is mediation, in which both parties meet with a mediator to negotiate a resolution to the dispute that both parties can agree to. If mediation is successful the parties will sign a legally enforceable mediation agreement. If mediation fails the parties can take their dispute to trial.

If the case comes to trial, a judge and/or jury will examine the evidence and hear each party's arguments and then issue a judgment. If unhappy with the decision, the losing party may appeal—a process that takes the dispute to another court. But even the "winner" can come out of the courtroom feeling like a loser—if awarded a monetary judgment, it can be extremely difficult to collect.

So why go through all of this? I've often heard it said that by the time

you have gone through the civil court process you will probably swear you will never do it again. But the truth is that most people never get that far because of the amount of money it costs to take the defendant to court. Often, it becomes clear that you are not the defendant's first victim, and you won't be their last. You may be fighting someone who is skilled at manipulating the laws, and your efforts may prove futile.

"Bad things happen to very savvy people sometimes, but more often than not the victims of horse theft or misappropriation are good, trusting folks who would never do something like steal a horse and so they don't expect it to be done to them," says Dottie Burch, an equine attorney in Raleigh, North Carolina. While she acknowledges it's an individual decision, she adds, "more times than not I discourage people from pursuing civil actions because of the expense, the time commitment, the emotional toll and the uncertainty of a positive outcome."

## HOW YOU CAN PROTECT YOURSELF

Going to court over a missing horse is the last thing you ever want to do. So it makes sense to take measures now to help avoid that possibility. Your goals at this point are twofold: first, to have documentation at hand that proves that you own a particular horse. You can't just say, "That's my horse," and expect him to be handed over to you in a dispute. Second, you need to take steps, in writing, to protect your interests when it comes to all transactions with your horse. Here's what to do:

- **Have ready access to proof of ownership.** Only one document truly proves your ownership of a horse: a bill of sale. This document contains, at a minimum, information on the buyer and seller, a description of the horse including any identifying marks, registration numbers, purchase price, terms, and signatures of the buyer and seller. Keep this someplace safe where you can find it quickly in an emergency—time can be critical if you become a victim.

Other documents, such as registration, association



# IS NOT A "CRIME"



**IDENTIFICATION:** Brands, tattoos and microchips can not only help you find your horse if he goes missing but can support your claim of ownership.

papers and passports, are not a substitute proof of ownership. But keep them handy, too, as backup. Veterinary records, Coggins or insurance statements that list your name and contact information can also be beneficial.

#### • **Make it easy to identify your horse.**

You have several options for accomplishing this goal. Brands and tattoos are age-old methods of marking a horse. Make sure you register yours with any relevant databases, and also keep close-up photos for your own records. A microchip, implanted in your horse's neck, is one of the most effective ways to trace a horse to his rightful owner—a reader passed over the chip yields a unique number that, when checked against a national database, gives your contact information. Not only can identification methods help someone contact you if they find your missing horse, they can also support your claim of ownership.

#### • **Create a "poor man's**

**copyright.**" Your goal is to establish your ownership of your horse at this point in time—long before, we hope, you encounter a theft of any sort. Start by making copies of each of these documents (store the originals someplace safe): bill of sale, registration papers and ID registrations for microchips, brands, etc.; veterinary records; health certificate; Coggins papers; farrier bills; any insurance-related paperwork; and your own photo ID. Also gather a set of clear photographs of your horse: both sides of his head and body, in both

winter and summer coats, with close-ups of any brands, scars, distinctive markings, whorls or any other distinguishing features. Include photos of you with the horse, with backgrounds that are clearly on your property—in front of your barn or house, etc. Then get a sample of pulled mane and tail hairs, which might be usable to provide DNA evidence, and seal them in a plastic bag.

Seal all of these papers and materials in a sturdy envelope, tape it securely closed, and mail it to yourself. When it arrives, it is important that you do not open or tamper with the envelope in any way. Instead, store it someplace safe, such as a safe-deposit box.

If you ever need to prove ownership of your horse, the postal cancellation stamp on the envelope gives you a legally documented date of possession before any proof which a third party may possess. The poor-man's copyright, if not opened, may be used to prove ownership with law enforcement. This could be well worth the effort if it is all that you have to

**Use contracts for all transactions. Take this as a given: Someone who takes your horse unethically won't hesitate to lie.**

prove that the horse is yours.

• **Get it in writing.** Use contracts for all transactions. Take this as a given: Someone who takes your horse unethically won't hesitate to lie. And then consider the perspective of the investigating officer who is interviewing both of you. You will be adamant that you had a boarding agreement, for example, and the other person will be just as insistent that you gave the horse to her, or that you failed to pick up your

# WHEN HORSE THEFT IS NOT A "CRIME"

horse by a certain date, or that you told her over the phone you didn't want the horse anymore.... Trusting someone based on a word and a handshake is a lovely thought, but it's a dangerous road to take when your horse is involved.

"When engaging the services of a friend or professional in the industry, a contract is essential, and is meant to protect both parties," says Debbie Hanson of RateMyHorsePRO.com. Since 2010, RateMyHorsePRO.com has advocated for fair practices within the horse industry by providing a resource for people to rate trainers and other equestrian professionals. The site also offers criminal background checks, sample contracts, and a compendium of news stories, including coverage of horse professionals who have been charged with criminal activity.

The contract does not have to be formally put together by an attorney, although that is ideal, says Hanson. However, she says, "The agreed-upon terms should be noted and the document must be signed by both parties."

Keep the contract current at all times. "We see victims get into trouble when the initial contract ends and new terms are agreed upon verbally," says Hanson. "Always protect yourself; don't get comfortable. Add the new terms to the original contract and have both parties sign and date it. If they won't agree to it in writing, walk away."

#### • **Keep your proofs of payment.**

It's very common for people who take or sell a horse to claim that the owner owed them money. Along with a written contract—which specifies exactly how much you owe—your cancelled checks or other proofs of payment (such as credit card statements, documentation of electronic transfers, etc.) are your proof that you are telling the truth.

#### • **Check up on people you hire.**



**A contract does not have to be formally put together by an attorney, although that is ideal. Be sure, however, to spell out the agreed-upon terms and have both parties sign the document.**

Unfortunately, many perpetrators of "civil horse thefts" are repeat offenders. To protect yourself, it's a good idea to do a little research before trusting your horse to a trainer, a new boarding barn, or any other situation where his care will be in someone else's hands. At the very least, ask for references of prior clients, then actually call the numbers provided. Internet searches can be useful, too, especially if a person's name was ever in the newspaper, but a "clean" search may not mean anything if the person has operated under different aliases.

For a fee, you can also have a criminal background check done to look

for prior arrests and convictions. This might seem like overkill in many situations, but it's probably a good idea if you're ever in a position to hire a regular employee to work in your barn. Above all, trust your gut. If something about a person's attitude or comments seems "off," then heed the warning and keep your horse safe.

But also be aware that a career con artist will be superficially charming and may be a master of befriending you and gaining your trust, all the while waiting for the opportunity to commit a crime. Individuals with antisocial personality disorder do not believe they should conform to the norms and laws the rest of us live by, says therapist Deborah Rich, LCSW, of Southern Pines, North Carolina. "They are deceitful and con others for personal profit or pleasure," she says. "They lack remorse and are indifferent to or rationalize having hurt, mistreated or stolen from another." Crazy like a fox, these predators are seldom prosecuted criminally. A good rule of thumb is that you will never meet a con man you don't like.

## A (SOMEWHAT) HAPPY ENDING

Angry, dismayed and feeling re-victimized, Jill Black turned to Stolen Horse International. After filing a report on the website, Black found an ally in Garron, a former paralegal who has been lending support to victims of horse theft at Stolen Horse International for years. Garron and Black started by returning to local law enforcement, but, Garron says, "we were virtually thrown out of the department" and told never to contact the detective about the matter again.

"I was not giving up," Black says. "I wanted my boys back and was going to make sure they came home

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# RESOURCES FOR HORSE OWNERS

- Law enforcement. If something goes wrong, call your local law enforcement first to file a report.
- Stolen Horse International/NetPosse. In addition to providing guidance for preventing theft, equine identification and missing horse recovery tools, this nonprofit organization offers online resource articles and a variety of items to help prove ownership, including farm security signs, microchips and freeze brands. Go to [www.netposse.com](http://www.netposse.com).
- RateMyHorsePRO.com. This informative website offers ratings and reviews of horse professionals as well as news, pro forma legal documents and criminal background checks.
- Your state Department of Agriculture. You'll find a number of helpful resources, including any information about brand registries and state laws pertaining to livestock.
- Equine attorneys. Use an attorney to set up agreements before a civil matter occurs. If you are involved in a civil matter you may find that an equine attorney can be extremely helpful.

no matter what it took."

Her only recourse was to sue the buyer of her Arabian and Quarter Horse cross in small-claims court. She returned to North Carolina for the proceedings armed with documentation proving she was the horses' owner. The court awarded Black both horses in late 2013. Left without a choice, the horses' buyer reluctantly gave the geldings back. They were immediately moved to another boarding facility, examined by a veterinarian and later shipped to North Dakota. Even though it was only small-claims court, the ordeal cost Black thousands of dollars, not to mention the emotional stress.

On the other hand, the woman who sold Black's beloved horses never suffered any consequences for her actions, either criminally or civilly.

What advice does Black offer? "Be sure to have all of your paperwork, lots



**ODYSSEY:** Shatan and Sony are now safely home. Their owner advises others to "be sure you have all of your paperwork, lots of pictures and even microchip your horses to prove they are yours."

of pictures and even microchip your horses to prove they are yours if this happens. If you need to have someone board them for you, the best thing I could say is check everything before leaving your babies." ●

**About the author:** Because there was no one to help when her horse Idaho was stolen in 1997, Debi Metcalfe started Stolen Horse International ([www.netposse.com](http://www.netposse.com)), a nonprofit organization dedicated to aiding individuals and their families who have missing horses and equipment. She also gives presentations to teach owners how horses can disappear (theft, disasters, civil matters, runaways) and how to protect, prevent and recover them when the worst happens. She is the author of *Horse Theft, Been There—Done That*.

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~ Karine Landers  
Marin, CA



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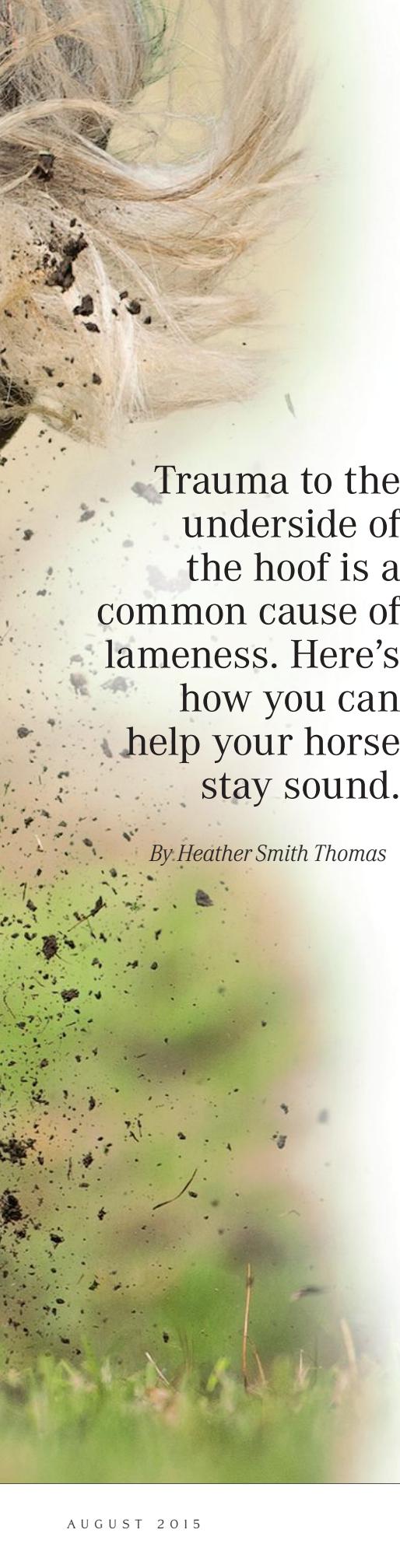
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Trauma to the underside of the hoof is a common cause of lameness. Here's how you can help your horse stay sound.

By Heather Smith Thomas

# WHY HOOF BRUISES HAPPEN

**M**aybe your horse seems a little "ouchy," going a bit short-strided over firm footing. Or perhaps he's been perfectly fine on most trails, but a little gimpy over rocky stretches. Or maybe nothing seemed to be amiss until your regular farriery visit, when paring down your horse's sole revealed a purplish-red spot: a bruise to the sole, often called a stone bruise.

Your horse's hooves may seem sturdy and unyielding, but they are more vulnerable than you might think. "Many people tend to think the foot is harder and stronger than it actually is," says Julie Bullock, DVM, a veterinary podiatrist based in Huddleston, Virginia. "The foot is a living, flexible structure; the sole and wall have some give, to expand and contract. The hoof is well designed to withstand the forces of concussion and trauma, but it can still be injured by too much impact."

By the time a hoof bruise is visible on the sole, weeks or months have passed since trauma of some sort—from rocky ground, a sharp stone or the

like—ruptured a small blood vessel in the foot, leading to a pocket of bleeding within its soft tissues. (A pocket of pus trapped within hoof tissues is called an abscess, which can be a sequel to an injury that also causes bruising but is a separate physiological process that requires a different approach to diagnosis and treatment; see page 52.)

Mike Pownall, DVM, of McKee-Pownall Equine Services in Campbellville, Ontario, likens the bruising process to what you might experience if you walk barefoot over stony ground: "If you are walking on hard ground and step on a rock just wrong, it will cause trauma. When a very hard object meets a softer object—the sole of the foot—something is going to give. This causes bruising in the horse's sole, which is disruption of blood vessels along with inflammation and pressure buildup inside the foot. This causes pain."

Depending on the depth and extent of the bruising, the result may be mild to severe lameness. Most bruises heal on their own as the sole and hoof wall grow out; more extensive injuries may require rest and attentive care.

Occasional hoof bruises are inevitable, but if they become a regular

occurrence, it's important to look for the reasons why. Multiple factors, including hoof conformation, local terrain and shoeing problems, can predispose a horse to chronic bruising, and you'll want to take steps to help keep his feet safe, healthy, strong and sound. Here's what you need to know.

## BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

The most common cause of hoof bruises is traveling at speed over hard, rocky terrain. But they occur on other types of footing as well. "On the East Coast, bruising is more prevalent in wet weather because the foot is softer; the sole tends to thin a bit and not be as strong," says Paul Goodness, CJF, a senior member of Forging Ahead, a group farriery practice based in Round Hill, Virginia. "Also, the ground is softer, and the hoof sinks farther into the dirt and may encounter a rock. So we see more bruises during late winter and spring."

Gail Conway, DVM, who practices in Comanche, Texas, has observed similar mud-related problems. "I've seen a fair number of cases where horses got along fine on rocky ground, but if it was muddy and rocky they were more apt to have problems, he says. "They might get mud packed in the foot, and a rock gets stuck in there and keeps pounding the foot until the rock is taken out."

Nor does winter offer a respite from hoof bruising risks. "When the mud freezes there are lumps and bumps, and these can cause bruising if the horse steps wrong," says Bullock. "Many people pull their horse's shoes for winter when they are not going to ride, then they trim the feet short and don't allow time for the sole to toughen up before the ground freezes or leave enough foot to protect it from sharp ice and frozen lumps."

In addition, says Pownall, "Horses with shoes sometimes get snowballs building up in the feet if they don't have the right kind of pads to prevent snow buildup, and when those snowballs freeze the horse is walking on blocks of ice. This can cause bruising. When the feet are trimmed in the spring, you can see the whole sole is inflamed and red, and you know the horse had a big snowball in the foot that was putting pressure on the sole for a long time."

Susceptibility to stone bruises varies among individuals as well. Just like every other part of his body, the thickness of a horse's soles will depend, at least in part, on his genes. "Some horses can't grow a thick sole, no matter how you

**LIVING HISTORY:**  
By the time a hoof bruise is visible, weeks or months have passed since the trauma that caused it occurred.



protect it," says Goodness. "If that individual horse has a sole that's only going to be one and a half centimeters thick, you can't make it thicker."

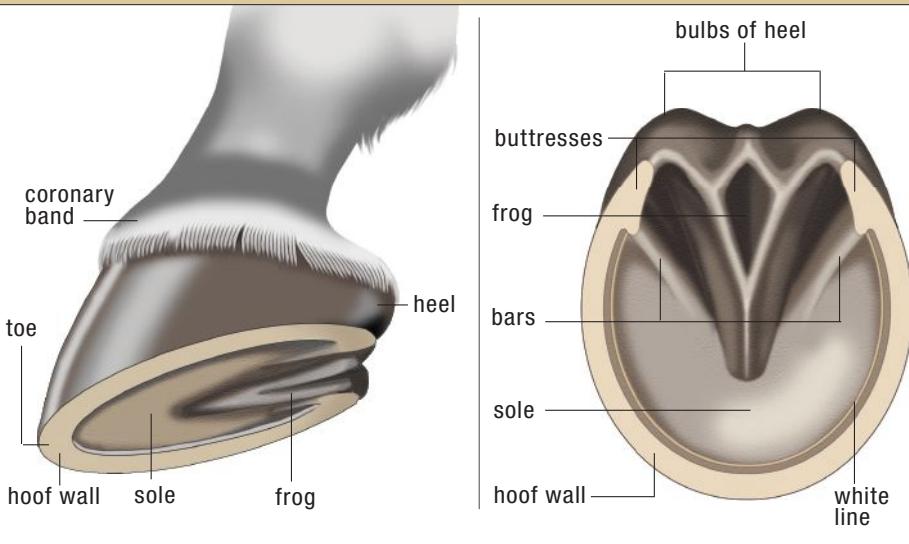
Other factors that can predispose a horse to bruising include an upright or flat-footed hoof conformation and farriery issues such as unbalanced trims, overdue shoeing and the use of toe grabs, borium and other devices that increase stresses on the foot.

• **Heel and bar area.** Bruises in the back of the sole, where the hoof wall meets the bars, are commonly called "corns." The stresses that can cause corns include upright or pinched heels that cause the horse to bear too much weight on the sensitive tissues at the back of the hoof. Another potential cause is the pressure of shoes that are left on too long, so that the growing hoof wall pulls the heels of the shoe forward

appears in an otherwise healthy white line indicates some leakage of blood from the sensitive laminae, the tissues that connect the leading edge of the coffin bone to the interior of the hoof wall. These are often the result of long toes or other hoof imbalances that cause strains on the laminae.

• **Hoof wall.** Bruising that appears in concentric lines parallel to the coronary band are caused by bleeding at the corium, the tissue layer where the growth of the hoof horn begins. These are more likely to be visible in white feet. This type of bruising is often the result of too much work on hard surfaces; hoof wall bruises may also appear in horses who paw or stomp repeatedly, especially on harder footing.

## HOOF ANATOMY



## THE TALES THAT BRUISES CAN TELL

The occasional hoof bruise is inevitable, but those that recur again and again in the same area of the foot indicate chronic stresses, imbalances or other problems that need to be addressed. If your horse has frequent hoof bruises, especially if the discoloration often appears in the same spot, talk to your veterinarian or farrier about the potential causes so you can find ways to ease the stresses before more serious injury occurs. The location of the recurring bruises offers clues to the cause of the problem:

over the sole. Delayed breakover caused by a too-long toe, which causes extra leverage that pulls on the laminae near the heel, can also cause corns.

• **Tip of the frog.** Bruising that occurs repeatedly around the front of the frog develops under downward pressure from the coffin bone. This type of bruising is more common in horses who work too hard on firm ground as well as in those with long toes.

• **White line.** A thin red bruise that

**If your horse has frequent hoof bruises, especially if the discoloration often appears in the same spot, consult with your veterinarian and/or farrier about how best to address the potential causes.**

frustration is that even if you take away the cause—the rocky footing or sharp ice—the bruise is still there and the horse still has to walk on a sore foot," Pownall says. "That area

may continue to be aggravated."

Taking a few days off from riding will help aid healing. If you do choose to ride, stick to slower speeds on softer footing, and ease off immediately if the "ouchiness" gets any worse.

A horse who suddenly turns up severely lame requires more attention. In addition to rest, icing the hoof can help to relieve the pain and inflammation. "An acute bruise can be helped more with cold than with soaking, and we recommend putting the foot in ice," says Bullock. "I also advocate anti-inflammatory medication in the beginning of treatment. Bute works about the best for pain in the feet."

It's important to keep in mind that bruising can affect more than the sole of the hoof. "There are many structures that can get bruised—such as the frog or the bars of the foot," says Bullock. "Some horses will actually bruise the coffin bone. A deep bruise in bony structure will take a lot longer to heal." And, of course, you'll want to call your veterinarian right away if your horse develops a sudden acute pain in his foot. Bruises tend to not leave a horse three-legged lame. If your horse is, it may be an abscess or even something more sinister like an infected puncture wound.

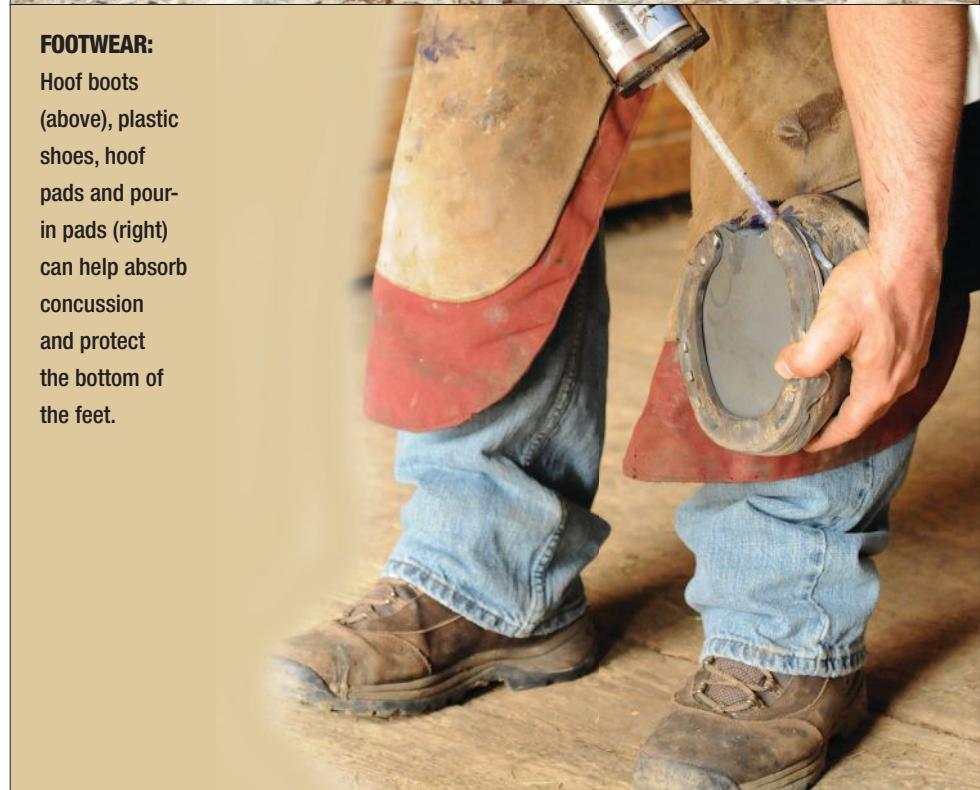
## PREVENTION STRATEGIES

If your horse has thin, sensitive feet, talk to your farrier about what can be done to provide more protection and support. You have multiple options, says Goodness: "One is to simply get the sole higher up off the ground [with a thicker shoe]. Another is to provide protective covering with a wider webbed shoe. A cushioning pad or some sole support [such as a pour-in pad] can also be helpful. Often when you start using some kind of protection like a pad or sole



### FOOTWEAR:

Hoof boots  
(above), plastic  
shoes, hoof  
pads and pour-  
in pads (right)  
can help absorb  
concussion  
and protect  
the bottom of  
the feet.



support, this helps thicken the sole just because it's covered and protected from wear. This allows it to grow thicker. The more natural protection you can have between the ground and the foot, the better."

The level of protection horses require varies. Some might need padding only during certain times of year or for particular events. "Some horses suffer bruising during training," says Bullock.

For example, if the horse has been living on a soft pasture all winter, he may need extra protection if you start conditioning him by riding on gravel roads. "There are many types of shoes and hoof boots available now that can help protect the feet," she says.

Other horses might need extra protection only when they're going to be working on rocky trails, such as during an endurance ride. "This is a

# WHEN THE SHOE IS LOST



Lost shoes, particularly out on the trail, are a common cause of hoof bruising. "It's good to be prepared, with something that can be wrapped over the bottom of the foot so it won't bruise on the way home if you've lost a shoe," says veterinary podiatrist Julie Bullock, DVM. A hoof boot is a good choice, but other materials will do, too.

"A roll of vet wrap or duct tape in your saddle bags or jacket pocket can come in handy," Bullock says. "I prefer the Gorilla Tape when trying to protect or wrap a foot. It is stronger than duct tape. And if you do use duct tape, choose the thickest, strongest, industrial-strength variety. I also carry a big Kotex pad because I sometimes have to get off my horse and bandage someone else's horse on an endurance ride." Even a folded sweatshirt, tied around the pastern, can create padding that might enable you to lead your horse out without chipping or bruising the foot.

When using the Gorilla Tape, says Bullock, "I take three pieces and put them overlapping, and another layer the other way, and put that over the bottom of the foot and then wrap all the ends upward. Then you can go around those with tape to help hold it. This provides extra thickness on the bottom to protect the foot."

lesson I learned here in the mountains of Virginia where it is very rocky," says Bullock. "I no longer train my endurance horses without pads—because of the rocks and the chronic pounding and impact. Anything to help absorb concussion and also protect the bottom of the feet will help, whether full pads, plastic shoes, pour-in pads or other options. The key is to be proactive."

If you opt for hoof boots, Conway

recommends carrying extras when you go out on the trail in case your horse loses one in mud or deep sand. "On one ride over particularly frustrating terrain, I came to a spot where there were four boots within a 10-foot radius, where they'd all been pulled off in the mud," he says. "We have places in our region where riders have to slow down going through sand or it will pull the boots right off. I don't see many

stone bruises right here, but I see some on endurance rides, and most of the time these are horses that lose a boot or a shoe."

At the other extreme are horses who get sore in almost any circumstances. For these cases, Bullock recommends keeping shoes on year-round, and also adding hoof pads or pour-in pads, if needed, even in winter. "To combat mud around the barnyard, people often haul in gravel or stone dust," she says. "If thin-soled or flat-footed horses have no shoes when they walk on the gravel, they may bruise. Those individuals do best if you leave front shoes on for winter, to get that foot up off the ground a little, to protect it from bruising."

Remember, though, that even well-shod horses can sustain bruises. "I have seen horses step on a rock during an endurance ride and be sore," Bullock says. "In one instance, a rock punched a hole through the plastic hoof pad and put a dent in the sole. While the horse was trotting it didn't bother him much and he wasn't lame, but when he stopped at the vet check, just standing around, he favored the foot. We iced it and let him go back on the trail, and he finished in the top 10 and was fine, but this just illustrates the fact that a horse can bruise the sole even when wearing hoof pads."

Also keep in mind that pads aren't the answer for all horses. "Some don't want anything on the bottom of their feet; they just won't perform as well," says Goodness. "There is a lot of difference among horses regarding what they perceive as support and what they perceive as pressure. I've had several horses that were a challenge because they were hardworking, top-of-their-game international athletes, but they didn't accept any help that we wanted to give them. They could wear only

# DEALING WITH ABSCESES

As alarming as it is when your horse suddenly turns up almost three-legged lame, an abscess—a pus-filled pocket that forms when bacteria penetrate into the soft tissues inside the hoof—is one of the more benign diagnoses: Usually, it can be treated readily, and the horse returns to work in a week or two. Still, any injury to the interior tissues of the foot needs to be taken seriously and addressed promptly.

If you suspect your horse has a hoof abscess, call your veterinarian. Once the diagnosis is made, the treatment is fairly straightforward—the goal is to encourage the pus to drain. “The abscess needs to break out and drain, and always looks for an area of least resistance, which is generally the coronary band or out through a separation of the white line at the sole,” says Mike Pownall, DVM, of Campbellville, Ontario. “I poultice the foot in a wet

diaper or Animalintex poultice. The constant wetness will soften the foot and help the abscess to drain.”

If an abscess does not resolve itself on its own within a few days, call in your veterinarian. “When it’s hard to get an abscess to break out and drain, the veterinarian may block/numb the foot so the horse isn’t feeling pain, and then have someone lunge the horse,” says Julie Bullock, DVM, of Huddleston, Virginia. “Sometimes exercise and movement creates just enough pressure in the foot to help bring it to a head and pop out a little quicker.”

If all else fails, your veterinarian may opt to cut into the sole to create a channel for drainage, although that can complicate healing. “I always prefer using a poultice to paring away the sole to create drainage, because that leaves a hole in the sole,” says Pownall. “I rarely do that, because often the

hole that is created causes more problems than the abscess, because it takes longer to heal and fill in again.”

Once the abscess has begun draining, it’s a good idea to continue with the soaking and/or poulticing to draw out all of the pus. It’s also important to protect the opening from further infection. “At first you can just put a bandage on the bottom of the foot, to protect it between treatments,” says Gail Conway, DVM, of Comanche, Texas. “Some people use a treatment plate that can be easily removed. This will protect the foot and it can be taken off for treatment.” Other options for protecting the foot while it heals include applying a regular hoof pad or using a boot.

Once the horse is sound again, it is usually OK to resume riding, as long as you take precautions to protect the foot. Let your horse ease back into more intense

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**BREAKOUT:** Treatment of hoof abscesses initially focuses on encouraging the pus to drain.

work as the tissues in his foot continue to heal. "The horse will tell you when he's ready," Pownall says. "You don't want to start out galloping around because there is still some damage there."

JULIE BULLOCK, DVM

minimal shoes."

Other measures for protecting a horse against stone bruises include applying one of the commercial products meant to help toughen the sole. "We tend to believe they help," says Goodness. "Essentially,

these are chemi-

cals that dry the sole and keep it from becoming soft. We don't know how much this helps, but it may be beneficial for certain horses."

Wet, muddy turnout conditions soften hooves and predispose them to bruises. Avoiding mud is impossible at certain times of year in many areas of the country, but you can take steps

to help keep your horse's feet dry. Bringing him into a stall each day can give his feet a chance to dry out, and laying gravel or even rubber mats in turnout areas can offer him a respite from standing in the muck.

Hoof supplements, especially formulations that include biotin, are another measure that may help strengthen a horse's hoof walls and soles—along with maintaining good general health, nutrition and weight. "Most of the time when we see a horse with a stone bruise it's a flat-footed overweight horse," Conway says. "Everything you can do to promote hoof health and stronger feet is all part of prevention."

**P**ainful, "ouchy" feet are no fun for your horse, or for you, when you have to limit your riding. But by taking steps to protect his hooves from the effects of hard impacts, you can make the most of your summer days in the saddle. ●

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Learning a few fundamental techniques can help you become a more valuable partner with your veterinarian when your horse is sick or injured.

# 7 VETERINARY SKILLS EVERY HORSE OWNER NEEDS

By Melinda Freckleton, DVM,  
with Christine Barakat



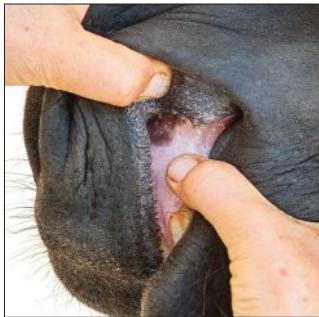
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**A**s an equine veterinarian, I rely on many resources to keep the horses in my practice healthy. From the drugs on my truck to consultations with my colleagues, I draw from a variety of assets to provide the best possible care. Among those assets are my clients, the horse owners.

A well-informed owner who is capable and confident doing a few basic horse health-care tasks is an incredibly valuable partner to a veterinarian. Of course, we don't expect our clients to be able to diagnose illnesses or perform any complex treatments—in fact, trying to do so can backfire and make a situation worse. But under the guidance of a professional, an owner with fundamental horse-care skills can play a key role in a sick or injured horse's recovery.

If you've owned horses for any length of time, you've probably done most, if not all, of these procedures. And chances are you're pretty good at them. Most are fairly straightforward, but it's still a good idea to refresh your skills from time to time. In



the same way that the best veterinarians continue their educations throughout their careers, the best owners take advantage of every opportunity to improve and expand their horse-care repertoire.

The most important skills fall into one of two categories: Gathering vital information about a horse's condition prior to the veterinarian's arrival, and aiding in the continuation of treatment after the veterinarian leaves. Here's a quick look at seven techniques you'll want to know how to do, along with my suggestions for how you can do them most effectively and efficiently. (To watch me demonstrate these techniques go to [EquusMagazine.com](http://EquusMagazine.com).)

## VITAL INFORMATION

The first and perhaps most helpful way an owner can assist a veterinarian is by gathering information about a horse's vital signs before even picking up the phone. Staff at a veterinarian's office "triage" cases based on the likely severity of the injury or illness. Having more information, rather than less, is always helpful. Here's a quick overview of the skills that can help you provide the best information and how that will facilitate the best care for your horse.

### 1. TAKING TEMPERATURE

A horse's temperature provides incredibly valuable information to a veterinarian. An increase from the normal temperature of 99 to 101 degrees Fahrenheit, for instance, can indicate any number of serious conditions. And the sooner I am aware of the situation, the better.

For example, if we get a call about a horse with loose manure and the owner can tell us that he also has a temperature of 103, I'm going to change my schedule to head out to the farm as soon as possible. A high fever suggests that the horse may have a serious illness. On

temperature isn't difficult. For ease, efficiency and safety, I suggest using a digital rather than a mercury thermometer, but if you prefer, an old-fashioned glass one will work. Attach the clip or string to the horse's tail to ensure easy retrieval, then carefully insert the thermometer into the horse's rectum. Keep the horse quiet and leave the thermometer in place long enough to get a reading: This will take at least three minutes for the glass thermometer; the digital unit will beep when the temperature has been taken. You can find digital thermometers made specially for horses, but simple, inexpensive ones made for human use will work, too—however, these don't have a string for retrieval, so hold on to them when taking a temperature.

Keeping a few things in mind when taking a horse's temperature will make the reading more meaningful. First, take it



98.6

I/O

the other hand, a horse with loose manure and no fever may simply be adjusting to new pasture growth. I'm still going to head out to the farm to do a full workup, but I'm not going to bump other appointments to do so.

Taking a horse's

# VITAL INFORMATION

## 2. MONITORING HEART RATE

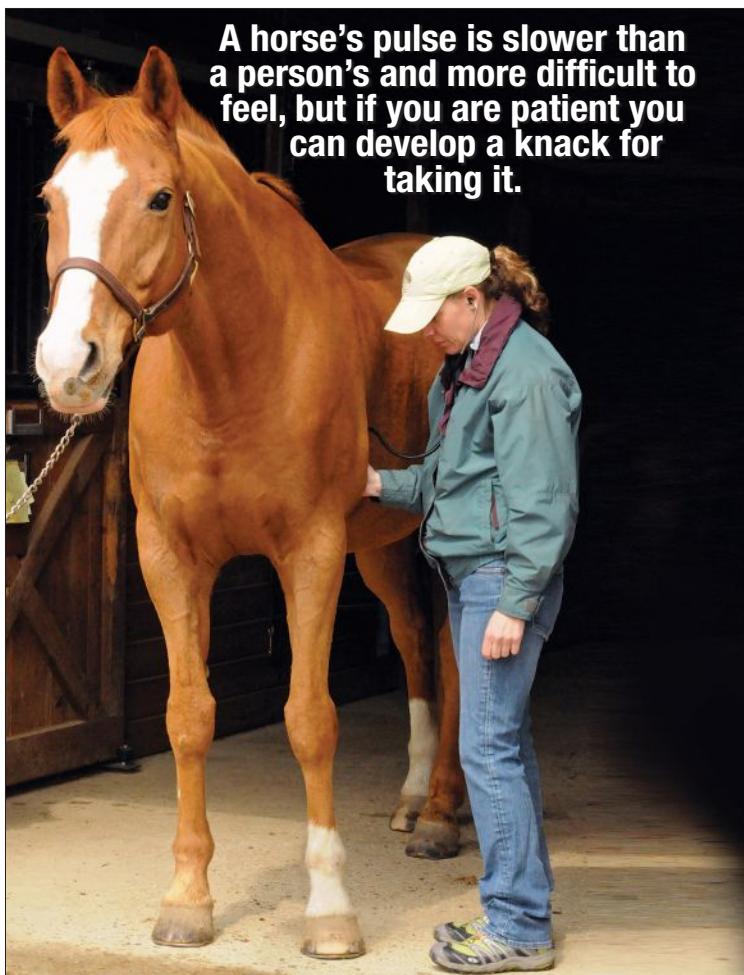


I don't often ask an owner for a horse's heart rate when they call me, but I'm thrilled if it's offered. A normal heart rate of a horse at rest is 30 to 40 beats per minutes. An elevated resting rate can be an indication of pain. That makes heart rate information especially useful when you are calling your veterinarian about a suspected colic. It may be difficult to tell for sure whether a stoic horse is in pain, but vital signs don't lie, and if his heart rate is elevated, he needs to be seen quickly.

Heart rate is the equivalent of pulse rate, but feeling a horse's pulse can be a little tricky. On horses, you can find a pulse down by the fetlocks or underneath the jawbone. Personally, I think under the jawbone is the optimal location; pulses down on the legs can be influenced by many things—such as the horse standing in cold conditions—while the pulse up by the jaw tends to remain stable.

To take your horse's pulse, stand facing his head and feel along the inside of one side of his jawbone, approximately where the throatlatch of a halter would lie. You can use either hand and check on either side. Place your thumb against the outside of his face to steady your hand and "roll"

**A horse's pulse is slower than a person's and more difficult to feel, but if you are patient you can develop a knack for taking it.**



before you give the horse any medications. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications are fever reducers. If you medicate your horse, then take his temperature, you will not get a useful reading. Ambient conditions will affect a horse's temperature, too. After a workout in the summer, it will naturally be elevated. If you're concerned about a high reading in that situation, hose the horse off with cool water, scrape him well and stand him in the shade for 20 minutes. His body temperature should drop considerably. If it doesn't, that's one more important detail to relay to your veterinarian.

your four fingers along the inside of his jawbone feeling for a very flexible, tube-like structure. That's the salivary duct, and once you've found it you can typically feel the pulse at the same location by easing up on the pressure a bit. A horse's pulse is slower than a person's and can be difficult to feel, but if you are patient you can develop a knack for taking it. To calculate heart rate just count the number of beats for 15 seconds then multiply by four.

Another option is to listen directly to your horse's heartbeats using a no-frills stethoscope that can be purchased for less than \$15 at a drug store. Simply grip the head of the stethoscope, keeping your fingers clear of the sensitive diaphragm on the front of the instrument. Then press the head firmly into the horse's "armpit," just above and behind his elbow where the girth lies. You may need to experiment a bit, but eventually you'll find the location where you can hear the heart clearly and begin counting beats.

Keep in mind the obvious (which is easy to overlook if you're worried): A horse who has been recently active will have an elevated heart rate, but it should decrease quickly when he rests, returning to normal within 20 minutes.

## 3. DETERMINING RESPIRATORY RATE



### SOUND OFF

You'll notice I don't include "gut sounds" on my list of the vital signs to gather prior to making a veterinary call. That's not an oversight. I find that owners typically get more excited about gut sounds than they should. The lack or abundance of gut noise is not definitive in determining a horse's condition. These sounds can be an important part of diagnostics and triage, but they aren't something you can count on and measure, because interpreting them is a bit of an art form.

Another helpful vital sign is respiratory rate. Usually, you can see the rib cage expand with each inhalation by standing at a horse's head and looking down the length of his flank—focus on the area just behind where your leg rests when riding English or where a rear cinch lies in Western tack.

Watch your horse breathe. Count the breaths. Seems easy, right? Not necessarily. The tricky part is making sure your horse is standing quietly. Horses use their sense of smell to understand what is going on around them, and as they sniff, their breathing patterns are disrupted. The same is true if a horse is snuffling for treats. Likewise, if you are trying to

monitor the respiratory rate of a horse and another down the aisle whinnies loudly, you'll probably have to start all over.

Respiratory rates are similar in horses, no matter what their size. The normal range is from eight to 20 breaths per minute. Obviously, a horse who has just worked will be breathing harder, but that rate should return to normal within 20 minutes of stopping. A horse at rest who is breathing heavily may be "blowing off" a fever as part of his temperature regulatory system, or he may have recurrent<sup>0</sup> airway obstruction ("heaves"). In either case, that's important information to share with your veterinarian.

## 4. CHECKING MUCOUS MEMBRANES

The color of your horse's gums, along with how long they take to refill when "blanched," can reveal a number of conditions, from dehydration to shock to certain toxic conditions. This makes it a terrific tool for horse owners to use when gathering information to relay to veterinarians. The trick is you can't wait until there's a problem to investigate; to

accurately interpret what you are seeing, you really need to know what "normal" is for your horse.

A horse's gums range in color from a salmony pink to a very pale, peachy pink. When circulation is compromised, the color washes out dramatically. A very sick horse will have nearly white gums or visible blood vessels on a grayish background.

# CONTINUED TREATMENTS

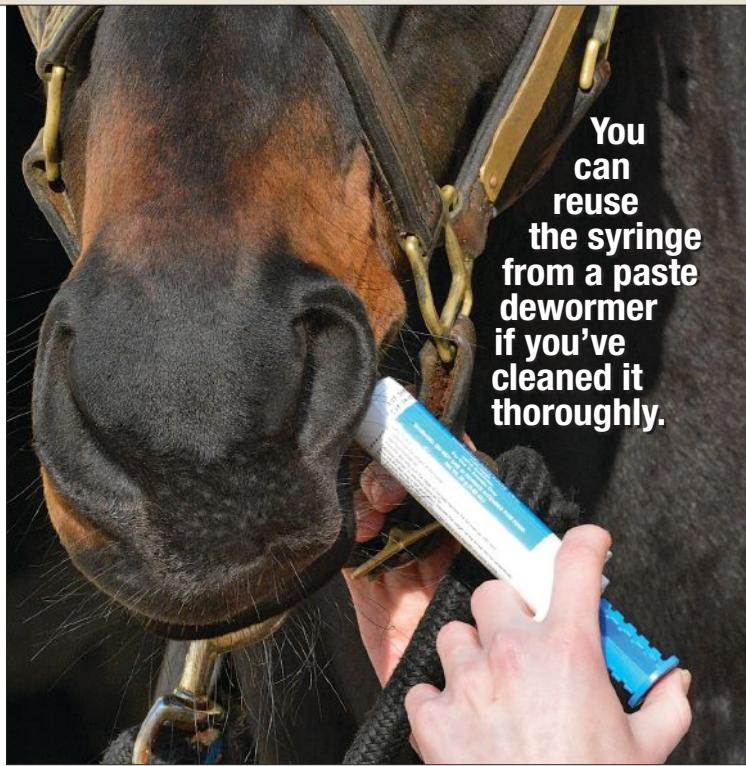


ARND BRONKHORST

Brick-red gums can be a sign of dehydration, endotoxemia<sup>a</sup> or plant poisoning. Checking gum color is easy; just pull up your horse's upper lip and take a good look.

While you're focused on the area, you can also do a "capillary refill" check. This involves pressing your thumb against the horse's gums just above a tooth until the area goes white under the pressure (one or two seconds is enough). Then remove your thumb and count how many seconds it takes for color to return. In a healthy horse, that will happen very rapidly—almost too fast for you to count seconds. If it seems slow, that's important information to relay to your veterinarian.

After a veterinarian has made a diagnosis, initiated treatment and headed down the farm driveway, you can step up to become an integral part of your horse's recovery. Horse owners can contribute to or even entirely take over many aspects of treatment and supportive care. Not only will this save you a considerable amount of money by reducing the number of follow-up calls or even the need for hospitalization, but it means the horse won't have to wait to be seen by a veterinarian to catch developing problems. Here are a few fundamental skills an owner can easily acquire to aid a horse's recovery.



You can reuse the syringe from a paste dewormer if you've cleaned it thoroughly.

## 5. ADMINISTERING ORAL MEDICATIONS

It's an unusual equine recovery that doesn't require some form of oral medication, given daily or even several times a day. Reliable administration of antibiotics or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories is crucial to swift and complete recovery. The good news is that if you've ever tried to medicate a reluctant toddler

or an angry cat, getting pills into a 1,200-pound horse will be surprisingly simple in comparison. All you need is the right tools and technique.

Start by crushing the medications. An old-fashioned mortar and pestle works well, as does a plastic "pill crusher" bought specifically for the purpose. Coffee grinders are popular, too—just make sure



DUSTY PERIN

it's never, ever used again for coffee. Mix the ground medication with a small amount of a delivery substance, preferably applesauce or yogurt. Water is convenient but doesn't always work well for this job because it's easy for the horse to spit out and doesn't always "carry" the crushed medications well. Whatever you use, make sure your final concoction fills no more than a shot glass or tiny paper cup. Then, suck all the contents into a catheter-tip syringe. You can also reuse the syringe from a paste dewormer if you've cleaned it thoroughly.

With the loaded syringe in your hand, stand facing your horse holding the noseband of his halter, near a side ring, in your other hand. Then, carefully slide the thumb of your "holding" hand into the side of his mouth at the bars. As he opens his mouth, quickly slip the tip of the syringe into his mouth and squirt its contents back up and over his tongue. (A rookie mistake is to angle the syringe so it squirts out the other side of the mouth onto the stall wall.) Hold on to the noseband for a second or two if you need to follow his head as you empty the syringe, but let go as soon as you can. Your horse will probably drop his head and chew, but with the right mix-in and technique, he won't be able to spit out the medication.

**Most eye ointments or drops must be applied three, four or even five times a day to be effective.**



## 6. APPLYING MEDICATION TO EYES

Your horse's eyes are pretty needy when it comes to medication. Most ointments or drops need to be applied three, four or even five times a day to be effective. And the process isn't always pleasant for either horse or human.

Many owners opt to hospitalize a horse for the duration of intensive ocular treatments, effectively outsourcing the hassle. Another solution is a "drip" system, which involves administering medication via tubing sewn through the eyelids and attached to the crest. But it's very useful to know how to medicate an eye, although it takes time to learn the

techniques, and your horse will have to be cooperative.

A couple of methods can be used to apply ointment to a horse's eye. Here's a simple one: Stand next to the horse facing the eye that needs to be medicated. Hold the ointment tube in one hand and slip the other underneath the halter (make sure it's adjusted loosely enough to allow your hand to slip out if the horse flings his head). Place the index finger of that same hand in the crease of the horse's upper lid, so the fold of skin rests on your fingernail. Place your thumb below his lower lashes. Press inward very slightly

and pull the eyelids apart, which will create a "trough" on the lower lid where you can squeeze the prescribed amount of ointment. Alternatively, place the ointment on your clean fingertip and swipe it into the trough formed by the lower lid.

You can modify this technique in a variety of ways, but the reality is that it may be a two-person job to administer eye medication and sometimes a horse just won't cooperate. In those instances, it's wise to go with hospitalization or a drip system. Yes, it's an extra expense, but the cost could otherwise be a painful, useless or lost eye.

# CONTINUED TREATMENTS

## 7. CHANGING BANDAGES

If your horse has sustained an open wound, you may find yourself in charge of bandage changes for the coming days or even weeks. This is a crucial task not only to keep the wound clean, but to assess healing and to spot signs that further veterinary intervention may be required. Bandage changes are an important job, for sure, but they are not as complex or fraught with peril as you may have been led to believe.

Your veterinarian will let you know if you need any special supplies or techniques for your horse's specific situation, but usually regular "quilts" and cotton wraps are fine for wound bandages. Fleecy polo wraps tend to stretch too much to securely hold wound dressings, so they aren't the best tool for the job. Self-adhesive veterinary wrap is convenient but many brands shrink when wet. That's no problem for a stall-kept horse but could be for one turned out with a bandage on.

The wound itself is likely to have a nonstick gauze pad over it, held in place with rolled gauze. Remove both at each bandage change and take a close look at the wound. An unusual drainage, unpleasant smell or anything else suspicious warrants a call to your veterinarian.

If you're unsure of what you're seeing, take a picture and e-mail or text it to your veterinarian. Your vigilance may catch an infection or proud flesh formation at a stage when it's still easy to address. Many people worry about the actual application of the bandage, but wound assessment is really the critical part of the process.

Clean and medicate the wound according to the instructions left by your veterinarian, then cover it again with a fresh nonstick pad and rolled gauze. Over that, apply the quilt, making



sure it's smooth with no wrinkles or bunches against the skin. Then, beginning in the center of the quilt, wrap the cotton bandage around the leg.

You'll hear a lot of proclamations about the "correct" direction to wrap, but in all honesty, when you are applying a well-padded wrap over a wound, it doesn't make much difference. You won't be pulling anything tightly enough to damage a tendon, and if you are, the direction you've wrapped isn't the problem.

Wrap down the leg and back up to cover the quilt, with enough pressure to hold the bandage in place but not squeeze or bind the leg. Consider how you'd like your helmet to fit—snugly, but not tight. Secure the wrap with a bandage tape or small piece of duct tape.

### HOLD THAT SYRINGE



Although many people give intramuscular injections to their horses themselves, I do not consider this an essential skill for owners and, in fact, I often prefer they not do it. So many things can go wrong with injections, from kicks during administration to infections later on, that I don't think it's worth the risk. I will show owners who really want to learn, but knowing how to give an injection "just in case" isn't necessary: If there's ever a situation where a horse must have an injectable medication and the owner is the only one around, there's another option: Many emergency injectable medications can be delivered orally (just take the needle off the syringe and deliver it like a dewormer) and have the full effect with only a slight delay in absorption. Of course, you need to ask your veterinarian before you give your horse anything by mouth or injection.

Equine veterinarians are lucky in that our clients are usually eager to become actively involved in their horse's care. When directed toward the right veterinary follow-up tasks, that desire can make a huge difference in the speed and completeness of a horse's recovery. ♦

To see video demonstrations of the techniques described in this article go to **EQUUSMagazine.com**.

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# Perfect subject

Sometimes, you just have to pursue your lifelong dreams. And so in early May 2014, my wife, Sheila, grabbed her camera in one hand and me in the other, and we headed west, toward the elusive bands of wild mustangs she'd longed to visit since she was a kid.

After driving 1,000 miles from Iowa, we arrived at the McCullough Peaks Wild Horse Area, a dozen miles east of Cody, Wyoming. The protected area consists of 172 square miles of mountainous desert, crisscrossed by dry creek beds and small cliffs, inhabited primarily by scrub brush, prickly pear cactus, antelope, huge jackrabbits—and more than 100 wild horses.

Slowly we cruised the highway that forms the southern border of the range, not knowing what to expect. We stopped every so often to scan the vast, rugged terrain with our binoculars, but mile after frustrating mile rolled by with no luck. Had we driven so far only to come up empty-handed?

Finally, in early afternoon, we spotted a cluster of tiny specks far up a slope in

The wild horses on the open range were any photographer's dream, but one battle-weary stallion stood out.

*By Brick Imerman*

*Photos by Sheila Imerman*

front of a butte, easily three miles away. With the binoculars we confirmed it was a herd of more than 50 horses. We drove another half mile to a designated parking area and pulled on our hiking boots.

We quickly realized this was not going to be an easy walk. We'd have to cross a 40-foot drop down to a small stream, then negotiate a long, rising slope to the base of the butte. After sliding down the steep embankment, we discovered that the stream, which appeared shallow from above, was actually two to three feet deep. So we hiked until we found a spot narrow enough for us to jump across while lugging a pack of cameras. Climbing the opposite

embankment, still hidden below the rim, we wondered whether the mustangs would still be there by the time we arrived.

Once we were back in view of the butte, we stopped to plan our approach. Rather than walking directly toward the herd from the south, we decided to angle toward the west, which would take us on a path that would pass by the horses about a quarter mile to the east. That, we hoped, would be close enough to get decent pictures without spooking them.

It was a great plan, but as so often happens, it had little to do with what actually happened. As we closed to within a mile of our quarry, to our surprise we startled a few bachelors grazing apart from the main herd. Alerted to our presence, these lone sentinels stared at us, statue-like, heads high, ears pointed, and nostrils flared into the wind. Then, rather than running away as we expected, a gray stallion suddenly galloped straight toward us.

Before coming to Wyoming, I had read up on what to do if attacked by a



**BORN FREE:** Tecumseh is one of more than 100 wild horses living in Wyoming's McCullough Peaks Wild Horse Area.

grizzly bear. And I knew that the range rules clearly state visitors are never to approach within 100 yards of a wild mustang. But none of that reading had prepared me for this: I'd never heard of anyone being attacked by a stallion, and the guidebook didn't specify what to do if it was the horse who violated the rules.

My heart pounded in my chest. I looked at Sheila, and she at me, and we watched wide-eyed as the stallion bore down on us, dirt flying from pounding hooves.

Finally, about 20 yards away, the stallion veered to the right and ran past us. Behind him followed another stallion, and then another, each curving by on the same path, until they all stopped just 20 yards away.

They were powerful. They were beautiful. They had passed so close.

Scarcely able to believe this was actually happening, Sheila and I stood back-to-back, she working her camera on the stallions while I watched the main herd to the north, now alerted to our presence.

Once they were content we were not a threat, the nearby stallions dropped their heads to graze. Rather than startle them again by moving off, Sheila and I sat down right where we were to watch and wait. As the stallions continued grazing, the herd to the north, which stretched almost a quarter mile wide, slowly grazed its way toward us. Within an hour, we had horses on all sides—bands of mares and stallions and the bachelors.

Pawing at the dirt, the stallions pranced, snorting challenges to each other. Dust billowed as bachelors jockeyed for position, darting in and out, trying to cut mares from other stallions' harems. Suddenly, one set of stallions after another reared in battle, ground

pounding, dirt flying, hooves flailing, lunging with vicious bites. The skirmishes were short-lived, but we witnessed several where both victor and vanquished were left bloodied.

It almost seemed as if the herd had crossed the miles of sagebrush just to place us as guests of honor in the front row of their spring performance. But then, as quickly as it began, the show was over. With the sun sinking rapidly toward the horizon, the herd slowly continued on, leaving us behind. We packed our cameras and began the long trek back to our car, marveling at our good fortune.

At dinner that night we pored over the pictures, reliving every moment. As we talked, Sheila asked a prophetic question: She wondered aloud about the fate of stallions severely injured in battle.

We were to find out the next morning.

Driving back to the range, we followed an old dirt trail, miles from where we had seen the herd the day before. Scanning the ridges with

binoculars, we spied a lone black-and-white pinto, miles from any other horses. He was probably about three-quarters of a mile off the trail, and we decided to hike in for a closer look.

He saw us almost immediately; we were certain he would bolt. Instead, however, he stood his ground and watched as we again approached at an angle, to avoid scaring him. But once we were close enough, we could see through the binoculars why he hadn't fled. He had a severe limp, and his ribs showed clearly. The horses we'd seen the day before were all strong and healthy.

When we got within about 100 yards, Sheila zoomed in on the horse with her telephoto lens. What she saw alarmed her. The stallion's right front knee was swollen and yellow fluid flowed from it. His right back leg was badly gashed and looked

even worse. His testicles appeared swollen, a telltale sign of infection.

We had stumbled

**WOUNDED: In May 2014, a skirmish had left Tecumseh bloodied and limping.**





#### HAPPY RETURN:

Tecumseh had recovered by the time this photo was taken last October.

we discovered his name: Tecumseh. He was a 10-year-old who once had his own band of mares but had recently lost them to another stallion. The clash had left him with the wounds we witnessed.

The BLM assured us that they were watching Tecumseh closely. To her dismay, Sheila was told they would not administer antibiotics, even though it was clear he was fighting infection. Tears again filled her eyes when they wrote matter-of-factly in an email that if he worsened, they would be forced to put him down. However, they remained confident he would recover with the new grass of spring.

Our vacation over, we had to leave both Wyoming and Tecumseh behind. On the long drive home, I could tell Sheila's thoughts were no longer with me but instead with the injured stallion.

She remained in touch with the BLM, and she was delighted to hear that Tecumseh was regaining his strength, and by midsummer, he returned to the main herd to join a band of bachelors. Sheila set her sights on a return visit, and in early October, we were back on the range. As fate would have it, on our first morning back, we spotted a small band of bachelors a short hike from the trail. Among them was a fit and healthy Tecumseh.

We approached the stallions from upwind. I am certain Tecumseh recognized Sheila's familiar scent—while we were still some distance away, he lifted his head and acted as if he recognized an old friend, moving confidently toward her. Sheila spent the day basking in the glory of the unusually warm autumn sun, waves of golden grass bending in the breeze, taking more photos of Tecumseh and his new band of brothers.

She was truly in heaven. Her lifelong dream had finally come true. ●

upon one of the defeated warriors that Sheila had spoken of the night before. I climbed a nearby hillside and sat down to watch as Sheila, a veterinary technician by trade, settled in to take pictures of the stallion and his wounds. As he grazed, he slowly limped toward—not away from—her. For over an hour, he closed the distance between them.

Clearly, he had been in many battles—his rump was covered with scars from years of fighting. But his last battle had left him so severely injured that it was a struggle simply to cover ground to graze. As he methodically closed the distance, Sheila reassured him with her soft voice as her camera clicked. Undoubtedly, he could smell her scent in the breeze.

Finally, Sheila got up. A tear was in her eye as she turned to leave her wounded warrior behind. As we hiked away, the stallion continued to watch us. It seemed as if he was reluctant to see us go, too.

When we got back to Cody, Sheila called the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to report the injured stallion. In this and other conversations with the BLM and local wild horse enthusiasts,

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### TOXICOLOGY

#### Is milkweed a danger?

**Q** My horse occasionally • grazes as I ride him on the trails—he knows when he is allowed to eat and when he is not. Normally he'll snack on grasses, dandelions and clovers, but he will also take an occasional bite of milkweed. I have been told that milkweed is dangerous and contains a neurotoxin for horses. Is this true? How much must he eat before damage occurs, and what is it about milkweed that attracts a horse to eat it if it's not good for him?

Sharon Bowen  
Chicago, Illinois

**A** Whether or not a horse is • poisoned by milkweed very • much depends on the species he has eaten and how much of the plant he consumes. More than 100 species of milkweed grow in North America, and all contain variable amounts of different toxins.

In general, species of milkweed with narrow leaves (less than half an inch wide) attached to the stems in whorls (verticillate) contain toxins that affect the nervous system. These narrow-leaved milkweeds are quite palatable when green and especially when dried into hay. Most livestock losses are associated with the narrow-leaved species such as whorled milkweed (*Asclepias subverticillata* and *Asclepias fascicularis*).

The other group of milkweeds that can cause poisoning in animals are the broad-leaved species containing cardenolides, which affect the heart and can



common (broad-leaved) milkweed  
*Asclepias syriaca*



narrowleaf milkweed  
*Asclepias fascicularis*

cause sudden death. Horses and other animals rarely eat these milkweeds because they are far less palatable. If your horse is routinely nibbling a particular type of milkweed, it would be wise to take a sample to your local extension office for identification.

The quantity of narrow-leaved milkweed necessary to cause severe poisoning and death of a 1,000-pound horse is approximately two to three pounds of the green plant. Occasional browsing on milkweed is not likely to cause any significant problem.

As for why a horse would eat a toxic plant—animals do not inherently know what is poisonous. When grazing freely, horses get by because they tend to eat only small amounts of a wide variety of plants, thereby never eating enough of any one toxin to become ill. However, a hungry horse confined in an area with little else to eat may consume large quantities of milkweed and can be poisoned.

**Anthony P. Knight, BVSc, MS,  
DACVIM**  
Professor Emeritus  
Colorado State University

## THIS MONTH'S EXPERT



**Anthony P. Knight, BVSc, MS, DACVIM,** was born and raised in Kenya and received his veterinary degree at the University of Nairobi in 1968 and an MS from Colorado State University (CSU) in 1971 before accepting a faculty position in large animal medicine in CSU's College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences. After 40 years as a CSU faculty member, he retired and moved to Tucson, Arizona. His interests lie in disease investigation, foreign animal disease, zoonotic diseases and plant toxicology. He has published two books on plant poisoning: *A Guide to Plant Poisoning of Animals in North America* and *A Guide to Poisonous House and Garden Plants*.

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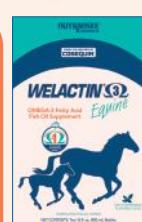
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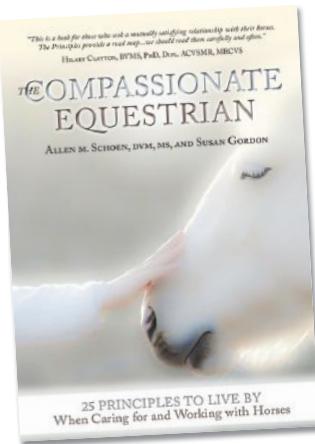
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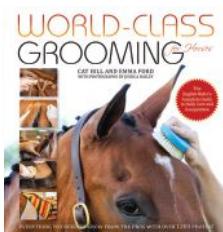


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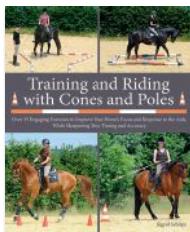


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# EQ GLOSSARY

**antibacterial**—drug or other substance that kills bacteria.

**antibiotic**—drug that interferes with the vital functions of bacteria; used to control or eliminate bacterial infection.

**bars**—on the bottom of a horse's hoof, the continuations of the horny wall running forward from the heels between the sole and frog.

**biotin**—water-soluble vitamin of the B complex.

**borium**—crystals in soft steel tubing that may be melted and applied to the bottom of a horseshoe to improve traction, especially on pavement and frozen footing.

**buttress**—thickened angle at the heel of a horse's hoof wall.

**coffin bone** (pedal bone)—major bone within the hoof, shaped like a miniature hoof.

**congenital**—present from time of birth; not necessarily hereditary.

**corium**—tissue layer in the skin or its appendages (hoof, hair, etc.) from which growth occurs; rich in blood and nerve supply.

**coronary band** (coronet)—boundary between the top of the hoof wall and the skin at the bottom of the pastern where hoof growth begins.

**digital cushion**—firm, spongy, wedge-shaped tissue mass filling the area between the frog and the deep digital flexor tendon.

**DNA** (deoxyribonucleic acid)—large organic molecule that consists of two chains of nucleotides wound around each other; the material of which

genes are made. Genes are responsible for the individual inherited characteristics of living organisms.

**electrolytes**—simple inorganic compounds that dissolve in water and are essential for many of the chemical processes in the body.

**endotoxemia**—presence of specific bacterial poisons (endotoxins) in the blood; usually caused by severe colic and resulting in shock and/or laminitis.

**fascia**—fibrous supportive tissue sheets beneath skin and between muscles.

**fecal egg count**—laboratory procedure for determining the number of internal-parasite eggs in a fecal sample; used primarily to estimate a horse's level of infection with ascarids and/or strongyles.

**fibroblast**—a type of cell that secretes the proteins and collagens necessary for the growth and repair of connective tissue.

**frog**—wedge-shaped, soft horn structure in the rear of the underside of the hoof.

**hyperkalemic periodic paralysis (HYPP)**—inherited muscle disorder of Quarter Horses and related stock-horse breeds that is characterized by muscle tremors, weakness and recumbency. Most cases are managed by diet and medication, but severe attacks can be fatal.

**laminae**—alternating “leaves” of flesh and hoof horn that bond the wall of the hoof to the underlying bone.

**micronutrients**—compounds essential in minute amounts to the growth and well-being of an animal.

**nonsteroidal anti inflammatory drug (NSAID)**—drug that contains no steroids and acts to reduce heat and swelling.

**omentum**—loose, folded extension of the membrane covering the stomach.

**palpate**—to examine by touching.

**polymerase chain reaction (PCR)**—a technique which is used to amplify the number of copies of a specific region of DNA, in order to produce enough DNA to be adequately tested. This technique can be used to identify, with a very high-probability, disease-causing viruses and/or bacteria.

**poultice**—hot or cold substance applied to a body part to draw inflammation from the area or to alter temperature.

**recurrent airway obstruction (RAO)**—respiratory disease, usually of older horses, induced by exposure to dusts typically found in stables. The disease is recurrent, depending on environmental exposure. The term “heaves” can also be used to describe RAO.

**shivers**—disease of horses characterized by trembling or quivering of various muscles.

**synovial membrane**—lining of tendon sheaths and joint capsules.

**tying up** (recurrent exertional rhabdomyolysis, azoturia, Monday-morning sickness, myositis)—severe, painful cramping of large muscle masses, resulting in discoloration of the urine with the byproducts of muscle destruction. Tying up often is seen in fit horses who resume heavy exercise after a few days of rest without any reduction in grain ration.

**visceral**—pertaining to the large internal organs in the thoracic, abdominal and pelvic cavities.

**white line**—zone on the bottom of the horse's hoof where the insensitive laminae and the interlaminae horn attach the wall to the margin of the sole. ●

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# My management consultant

I felt a little guilty leaving for the barn after only eight and a half hours at work. That may sound crazy, but I run a 24-7 news operation full of constant pressures and staffed with workaholics. Long days are the norm.

This had been yet another day of hard decisions and problems with no solutions in sight. By about 4 p.m. the thought of spending time with my beautiful palomino had become irresistible. I left the office with riding clothes in one hand and a big load of professional guilt in the other.

I began riding around the time I started my current job. Horses were my midlife crisis, the thing I always wanted to do. I had been that horse-obsessed kid with her nose in the Black Stallion novels who dreamed of riding but never really got to do it. In my 40s it finally dawned on me that if I really wanted to, I could just go ride. So I signed up for lessons, leased a few horses, then bought one of my own.

Lady was a 9-year-old trail horse with loads of unrealized potential. She clearly was bored with her job of hauling park visitors around the same wooded trail day after day. She walked slower and slower on each ride until

**I didn't get mad. I didn't lose patience. I just went back to square one and refocused the group.**

they stopped sending her out. But she had a beautiful, forward, lofty trot that I fell in love with. She also had a lot of funny quirks and fears. Drop something on the ground and there'd be a barrage of snorts. Cross-ties, indoor arenas



**The skills I learned training my quirky mare came in handy when I needed to handle a crisis at work.**

*By Tamar Charney*

and having her back hooves picked were all scary things for her. We worked through the fears, we worked on bends and we spent hours with trot poles. This winter we even did a practice test in a dressage clinic.

It was rewarding to watch my mare progress, especially on days when I wasn't getting anywhere at work. When I got to the barn that day after sneaking out, I

tacked Lady up, then checked my e-mail before I got on just to make sure nothing was imploding back at the office. What I found wasn't another problem but a thank-you note from a colleague:

"You have great patience and tact. More than me. I'm in awe."

Earlier that day we'd spoken by phone during a series of meetings about a project. I hadn't given the call another thought. But the minute I saw the e-mail I knew what I had done to earn the compliment: I'd simply applied to my job the skills I'd learned

at the barn.

**PERSPECTIVE:** The author, shown with Lady, describes her hours at the barn as "the best management training I've ever had."

I had been in a meeting where one of the participants became the human version of the horse who is suddenly

afraid of the spot of sunlight he'd previously walked through without pause or who forgets the cue you worked for weeks to teach him. The call and the project were suddenly headed off course. Fear was in the air, and no one was sure where we were headed or why.

I didn't get mad. I didn't lose patience. I just went back to square one and refocused the group, revisiting what we were doing and why, and rewarded any small steps that got us moving back to where we needed to be. I'd done it all without thinking about it. It seemed like nothing to me, but not to my colleague. And then I realized that before Lady, I would have gotten mad. I wouldn't have been able to get us back on track. And the project might have collapsed.

All those hours I'd spent at the barn had been the best management training I'd ever had. Lady didn't know she was signing on as a management consultant when I bought her. But she's pretty good at her new job. ●

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